SHORT STORIES

EDITED BY C. ARTHUR PEARSON (OF PEARSON'S WEEKLY)

No. 304. FOR WEEK ENDING OCTOBER 27, 1894. [PRICE ONE PENNY.

MASON'S

EXTRACT OF HERBS

For the Immediate Production of

BOTANIC BEER.

A Nine-gallon Cask of Alcoholic Beer from a Brewery will cost you 10/6, but Eight Gallons of Beer made from

MASON'S EXTRACT OF HERBS

Can be obtained for 6d., plus a pound or two of Sugar and a little Yeast.

THE FINEST BEVERAGE IN THE WORLD.

Inventors and Manufacturers:

NEWBALL & MASON,

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If unable to obtain it in your neighbourhood, send 9 stamps for sample bottle; or samples of both Wine Essence and Extract of Herbs, post free for 15 stamps.

One little bottle of Norton's Pills
Is not guaranteed to cure all ills,
But one little bottle, beyond all question,
Will thoroughly conquer Indigestion!

TRADE MARK.

NORTON'S

ONE LITTLE BOTTLE.

100 years' Reputation as an unequalled remedy for Indigestion, Sick Headache, Biliousness, Stomach and Liver Complaints. In Bottles 1/1½, 2/9, and 11/-, of all Medicine Vendors throughout the World. Ask for NORTON'S CAMOMILE PILLS and do not take a substitute.

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ON SALE, with 25 per cent. Discount for Cash, or 14s. 6d. per month (Second-hand 10s. 6d. per month) on the three years' system.—Lists Free of C. STILES and CO., 40 and 42, Southampton-row, Holborn, London. Pianos Exchanged.

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IT IS A STARTLING FACT

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Full Dress Length (Carriage Paid) FOR **7/6**

Money returned if not approved.

20,000 Sets of Patterns now ready, write at once. Patterns are sent Post Free and need not be returned.

These beautiful Serges are specially manufactured for Autumn and Winter wear, elegant in appearance and are not heavy as most Serges are. They will not spot with rain or wear threadbare.

£5,000 to be Given Away in Presents to Purchasers.

Thousands of Testimonials from all parts of the World.

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BRODIE'S IMPERIAL HAIR DYES & C°

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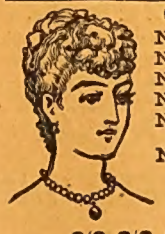

No. 1 Black
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No. 4 Golden Brown or Auburn
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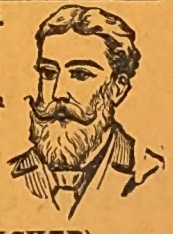
No. 6 Brodie's Hair Grower and Restorer



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2/6, 3/6, 5/- & 10/6 (SECRETLY PACKED).

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Established 1868. Once Tried, Always Used.

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HAS GOOD POINTS!!!
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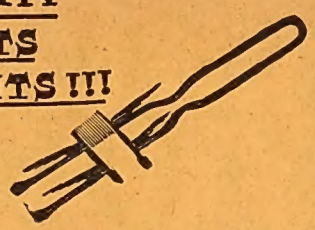

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CAN'T SCRATCH THE HEAD, AND WON'T FALL OUT.

THEY COST YOU EXACTLY SAME PRICE AS OLD SORT.

EACH STORE AND WAREHOUSE KNOWS ALL ABOUT THEM.

SAMPLES FREE ON RECEIPT OF POST CARD.

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THE MOST FASCINATING PARLOUR GAME.

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Obtainable of all Stationery and Fancy Dealers.

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"MIZPAH" BROOCH.

The most popular piece of Jewellery in the World. Every purchaser delighted. Each Brooch Hall Marked, and in handsome heart-shaped plush case.

Silver, 5s.; Gold, 30s.; Post Free.

Engagement Jewellery a Speciality.

Catalogue (618 Illustrations) Post-free.

MASTERS, Jeweller, RYE, SUSSEX.

BREAKFAST—SUPPER.

EPPS'S

GRATEFUL—COMFORTING.

COCOA

BOILING WATER OR MILK.

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For Samples (returnable), &c., enclose addressed envelope to EVANS, WATTS & Co. (P 228), Merchants, Birmingham.—*This is genuine.*

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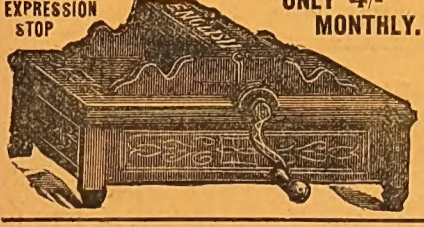
WITH EXPRESSION STOP

ONLY 4/- MONTHLY.



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Price 30s. Terms 4s. deposit and 4s. monthly.

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WE ALL WANT

to have beautiful and luxuriant hair, but it is almost impossible, leading the artificial life we do, unless we use WHITE'S QUICKENER—that will ensure it. Carriage paid 1s. 3d. per bottle. ARTHUR WHITE, 34, GRAY'S INN ROAD, LONDON, W.C.

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NEW UPRIGHT GRAND PIANOFORTE

26 GUINEAS (*Net Cash Price*).

This Piano is confidently recommended as the very best instrument ever produced at the money. For beauty and resonance of sound, for delicacy and brilliancy of touch, for exquisite modulation and the perfection of workmanship it cannot be excelled. It has all the latest improvements, including entire Iron Frame (suspended), Harmonic Bar, Best Check Action, Double Covered Machine Hammers, Bushed Keys, &c., Marqueterie or Chased Gilt Embossed Panels and Gilded Bracket Trusses. Supplied in Walnut, Rosewood, or Ebonised, and the net cash price is 26 Guineas. Inspection and trial is invited.

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permanently and absolutely by an entirely new and harmless self-treatment. Total destruction guaranteed. This marvellous remedy has never yet failed. Pamphlet, giving full particulars, sent on receipt of stamped addressed envelope.—Prof. F. W. HOLT, Argyll Chambers, West Strand, London. (Mention this paper.)

TOWLE'S PENNYROYAL & STEEL PILLS FOR FEMALES.

QUICKLY CORRECT ALL IRREGULARITIES, REMOVE ALL OBSTRUCTIONS and RELIEVE the distressing SYMPTOMS so prevalent with the sex. Boxes 1s. 1½d. and 2s. 9d. (the latter size contains three times the quantity), of all Chemists, or will be sent anywhere on receipt of 15 or 34 stamps, by the maker,

E. T. TOWLE, Chemist, NOTTINGHAM.

Beware of Imitations injurious and worthless.

A BOON TO LADIES

Collins' Marvellous Female Remedy.

Mr. COLLINS (who was 30 years a member of the Royal College of Surgeons of England), will forward free of Charge, full PARTICULARS of a REMEDY, which during an extensive practice both at home and in the Colonies, he has never known to fail in the most OBSTINATE CASES of OBSTRUCTION and IRREGULARITIES. Send addressed envelope for full particulars, and waste no more time and money on useless Pills and so-called Remedies, &c., which, in the majority of cases, are nothing but PURGATIVES, and cause SICKNESS, PROSTRATION, and PAIN, without having the desired effect.

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THOMAS OTTEY, Chemist, Burton-on-Trent.

Please mention this paper.

MADAME FRAIN'S

FAMOUS MIXTURE.

The most powerful and effective on earth.

For the most obstinate cases. Will not injure the most delicate. Price 7s. 6d. (Strongest, 11s. per bottle); post free, 6d. extra. HERBAL INSTITUTE, 1a, Hackney Road (opposite Shoreditch Church), London, N.E. Send at once stamped directed envelope for particulars and proofs. I will forfeit £100 for every testimonial that is not genuine, and they can be seen at any time.

A Real Boon to Ladies.

TO Especially to those who wish to LADIES
TO know of a safe, certain, and LADIES
TO speedy remedy for all irregular- LADIES
TO ities and obstructions, a remed LADIES
TO which, under the most trying LADIES
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TO No case hopeless, failure is LADIES
TO simply impossible, as Mrs. Snow, LADIES
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TO my anxiety and misery was LADIES
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TO pills and other things in vain. LADIES
TO Half the quantity you sent LADIES
TO proved effective, to my intense LADIES
TO joy and surprise. LADIES
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TO bottle at 4s. 6d. (by post, 4s. 9d.) LADIES
TO is usually sufficient for any case. LADIES
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TO forwarded to any lady on receipt LADIES
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TO Mrs. P. S. S., LADIES
TO 145, STOCKWELL ROAD, LADIES
TO LONDON, S.W. LADIES

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POSITIVELY CURES.—Vide *Lancet.*

PARTICULARS FREE.

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RUPTURE.

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SHORT STORIES.

EDITED BY C. ARTHUR PEARSON.

No. 304.] FOR THE WEEK ENDING OCTOBER 27, 1894. [PRICE ONE PENNY.

A BIT of CANDLE

IT was truly a most agreeable surprise. Benton and I had not set eyes on one another since we were hobbledehoys at school together. And now to think that, after fifteen years of almost antipodean peregrination, we should suddenly find ourselves *vis-à-vis* at the dining table of a Melbourne hotel.

Of course, we had a world of matters to discuss; and that we might do it uninterruptedly Benton asked for a private room. The apartment into which we were shown was on the ground floor. It was comfortably furnished, and looked out upon a wide verandah. Here we sat and chatted and smoked cheroots until ten o'clock, when a startling thing happened. We were both engineers, and up to this time our conversation had been largely of a shoppy character; but at last professional experiences seemed to be exhausted, and we had branched off into annother theme.

"Married yet, Benton?" I inquired.

"My dear fellow," he replied, his eyes kindling with enthusiasm; "I've got the most precious little wife this side of Paradise. She——but wait a moment, that reminds me——"

The window-shade was only two-thirds drawn, and Benton rose to pull it completely down. As he did so a bullet crashed through the glass and, barely grazing his shoulder, buried itself in the opposite wall of the room. Benton's look as he stepped back was one of disgust rather than surprise.

"That fiend of a Spaniard again!" he cried. "I sincerely trust the fellow will soon tire of his amusement. It is becoming positively annoying."

"Amusement."

"Yes, the game of revenge the blackhearted scoundrel calls it. That is the fourth attempt on my life in two years. A big price to pay for a wife, is it not?"

"I doubt if the best woman in the world is worth it," I responded; "but explain. How on earth, my dear Benton, did you come to get Nemesis for a mother-in-law?"

After describing his assailant to those who had rushed in on hearing the report, and desiring the landlord to place the matter at once in the hands of the police, Benton lit a fresh cheroot and related the following peculiar experience:

"Two years ago," said he, "I was commissioned by the mining company for which I worked to look closely into the condition of several of their Mexican mines. After making a considerable circuit, I came at last to Palos de Santa Fé.

"This was a picturesque little village situated in a luxuriant valley. Looking from it up the mountain one could see the entrance to the mines, suggesting to the mind so many rat-holes in the hillside. One would scarcely have imagined, gazing over this peaceful valley, that a terror had for years sat brooding above it. Yet such was the case, and it was to find out whether or not there was any immediate danger of that terror stooping to clutch its victims that I had been sent there.

"In plain words there was known to be stored somewhere among those mountain peaks incalculable masses of water which our workings, if we continued them, were bound to tap sooner or later, and involve the destruction of hundreds of human lives. Such, then, was the state of affairs.

"I should tell you, by the way, that since we were at school together I have added to my profession of engineer that of geologist. I was stopping at a little posada, perched a mile or so above the village.

"It was kept by one Diez, an old Spaniard with a villainous face and a record that was far from enviable. This posada was a sort of meeting-place for the miners, and when the rough fellows became aware of the nature of my errand, they looked upon me with rather an unwelcome interest.

"As my work progressed and I saw it would be necessary to advise the immediate closing of the mine, my position among these reckless miners grew more and more unpleasant. On my report hung the prosperity, nay, the very existence of their village, and as for my landlord, Diez, he would have to shut up shop, and, like the miners, make a livelihood elsewhere.

"To be such an important factor in the success or ruin of hundreds of rough, revengeful miners entailed, as you can well understand, great personal responsibility. Of course, I had no intention of taking them into my confidence as to the real condition of things, and on this fact I counted for my safety.

"Unconsciously, however, I must have let out my secret; indeed, it was a very easy lesson in physiognomy, for the anxiety and worry on my face grew deeper and deeper as the conviction impressed itself upon me that my report must doom the village and cast its dwellers out of employment.

"Why otherwise, they argued, should I be anxious and worried. I believe I am not a coward, yet a fear for my life took possession of me, and I was careful to be continually armed, and avoid anything that looked like a trap of the enemy's.

"Now Diez, my landlord, had a daughter, a beautiful girl, as sweet and innocent as her alleged father was sour and villainous. Her mother she had never seen.

"On my previous visit to Palos on less important affairs I had always put up at this posada, and as I watched the girl develop from childhood to womanhood, my interest in her grew stronger than I would have cared at the time to confess.

"Juanita had always been extremely attentive to my necessities, and we had become fast friends. As for looking upon the girl as a sweetheart, that I would not permit myself to do, seeing her father intended for her an alliance with his nephew Antonio.

"It was easy to be seen, however, that Juanita did not favour his suit. She had no smiles for Antonio and she repulsed his attentions at every opportunity. So at any rate it appeared to me for a week or two after my arrival.

"Latterly, however, she seemed to have changed towards

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him. Hitherto she was rarely to be seen behind the bar where Antonio attended, but now she lingered about the room apparently with no other object than to be in the young man's presence.

"Then, too, to his great delight, for the fellow really loved her, she submitted shyly to his caresses. A close observer, however, might have seen enough to make him suspicious of her sincerity. As for me, I was pained to observe that she shunned my presence and treated me with considerable coldness. One day, finding her alone, I ventured to address her in words of reproach.

"'Hush!' she exclaimed, laying her finger on her lips warningly, 'You must have patience. I cannot explain just now, but, oh, be very careful!'

"And with a look mysterious, but yet not unfriendly, she hastened from the room.

"At length my stay drew to a close. My report was finished, and early to-morrow morning I should be off. I was in better spirits that evening than I had been for weeks. The prospect of soon being relieved from my terrors lifted my heart into a freer atmosphere. Still my pleasure was tinged with two regrets. The first was that I should be the instrument used to depopulate this peaceful little village, and the second concerned Juanita. The girl was absent somewhere. I had not seen her pretty face for a whole day. In vain I tried to drive her out of my mind; the thought intruded itself that I might never see her again.

"'Shall I have the privilege of saying good-bye to señorita?' I inquired of Diez, after paying my bill, so as to be ready for an early start in the morning.

"'I fear not, señor, my daughter will not return until late to-morrow. Cannot señor wait a day longer?'

"'Impossible,' I said, 'I must be off in the morning, so you will please convey to señorita on her return my message and regrets.'

"'Will señor do me the favour of joining me in a bottle. I would esteem it a mark of parting goodwill?'

"I assented, and a bottle of his best champagne being brought, we drank health and prosperity to each other in several glasses. The old villain, to think that all the time he had murder in his heart, and was but preparing his victim for the slaughter. This parting interview took place on the verandah. The evening was dark, and scarcely a breath of air was stirring. It was about 9.30. Presently I rose to go to my room, the door communicating with which was at the further end of the house, and round the corner some forty feet away.

Laying her finger on her lips

"'One moment, señor,' said Diez, entering the house, 'I will bring you your light.'

"The champagne had made me quite lively, and I whistled a merry tune as I waited for his return. In a minute or two he returned, bearing a short stump of candle in a socket. This candle he at once proceeded to light.

"I was too unsuspicious at the time to take much notice of the fact, but I remembered afterward that his hands trembled and his face showed ghastly as the gleam fell upon it.

"'There is no air stirring,' he said by way of excuse for lighting it; 'and besides, the verandah is somewhat littered and señor might stumble. Good night.'

"'Good night,' I said, taking the candle. 'Don't forget to——.' On looking round I discovered that my worthy landlord had taken a most unceremonious departure.

"'Oh, well, it's no matter,' I said to myself; and resuming my merry tune, I whistled my way along the verandah toward my room.

"What's the matter?"

"I had just turned the corner when suddenly the white-robed figure of a girl with pale face and startled eyes confronted me, and without a word snatched the candle from my hand and with a swift movement hurled it over the railing into the ravine below.

"'Juanita! You here! What's the matter?' I cried, considerably startled.

"There was no need for a reply, for just then came the sound of a loud explosion from the place into which the candle had fallen.

"'Come away!' she said, seizing me by the arm. 'They had sworn to kill you. Let us go quickly.'

"Without a minute's delay we fled down the steps and out into the darkness. Travelling all night, the dawn of the morning saw us safe and sound within a convent on the other side of the mountain.

"On the way the brave girl told me how it was to save me she had loitered round the bar listening to the plottings of the men.

"They had decided to do away with me by means of a candle, hollowed out underneath so as to make room for a small dynamite cartridge. A minute's burning of the treacherous affair, and the bearer of it would be hastened into eternity.

"The horrible plot became known to Juanita so suddenly that unwittingly she gave utterance to an exclamation which aroused the suspicion of the conspirators, and she was confined in the outhouse of a distant corral, so that she might not prevent the accomplishment of the dastardly deed.

"How she struggled to escape from her prison her dear fingers show to this day, but the precious little woman never looks regretfully at the scars, for you see they always remind her of how she saved her husband's life.

"As for the other gentleman who has left his card upon the wall yonder," said Benton, pointing to the mark of the bullet, "you have doubtless by this time guessed that his name is Antonio."

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Thomas Harding, Reporter

"SEND Mr. Harding in."

The managing editor irritably dropped the speaking tube, and exclaimed half to himself, "Why couldn't those confounded Lancashire miners have taken some other time to air their grievances?"

The managing editor did not mean to be unreasonable; but he did wish that the pitmen had not chosen for their strike a time when every news-field was overcrowding the paper, and when an unusually active political campaign was beginning.

He drew his hand wearily across his forehead with the gesture of a man whose brain is overworked.

At this moment an alert and very young man scarcely more than a boy, clear-eyed and frank in appearance, looked in at the door.

"Come in, Mr. Harding. I shall have to send you away on special work. Those everlasting miners have struck. I want you to get up there by the first train to-morrow morning. You know upon such a matter it won't do for the *Magnet* to be beaten; and I needn't tell you that the *Magnet* wants the whole truth about it. That's one reason why I send you."

"Thank you, sir, I shall be glad to go."

"I'll put some one else on that matter of Colonel Benson's murder. And, Harding——"

"Yes?"

"Return to-morrow night, if you can. If you cannot, stay on; but see it through, if it takes a month."

Harding was full of enthusiasm in his work. He exulted boyishly in the important assignment thus committed to him, for he knew that a good performance of such a duty would contribute to his advancement.

When the *Daily Magnet's* special correspondent alighted from the morning train, the coal mines were deserted, and angry and discontented miners were gathered round the pit mouths.

All that day Harding went from place to place, winning the confidence of the owners by his frank and gentlemanly bearing, and that of the leaders of the strike by his evident fairness and desire to get at the exact truth.

He found that he could return on the evening express; and when he took the train at a quarter-past seven, his report of the matter was already nearly completed.

Under the dim swaying oil lamp he scribbled on industriously, sure of triumph. The other newspapers, he had found, were depending upon inefficient local correspondents for their accounts of the matter.

The train rushed through the gathering darkness. The sparks swept back from the throbbing engine in golden showers, like the tail of a comet. Harding worked on, concentrating all his energy upon writing a graphic account of the strike.

The lights of the town of Bedford were shining, only two or three miles distant, when the whistle sounded a wild, shrill note of alarm. Then came a crash, the splitting and shattering of timbers, the snapping of iron and steel, and above all other sounds the cries of human agony.

The express train with its burden of people, crushed, mangled, dead, or dying, lay piled upon the line, a ghastly wreck in the summer night.

It was the old story. Some one had blundered, and the fruits of the blunder were reaped in human lives.

Tom Harding was stunned by a broken board, but only for a short time. He roused himself with a half-dazed consciousness of disaster, that left no room for an immediate sense of pain. He thought of his mother—then of his newspaper.

This thought roused him to a consciousness that he had work to do; and in the sudden awakening to the realities of the situation, he became aware that his legs were so pinioned that he could not move, and that pains were darting through his body—unaccountable pains growing constantly more intense.

He moved slightly, and would have cried out, but that the piercing screams about him kept him still from very shame. His nervous grasp tightened on the note-book and pencil which he still held in his hand.

Men approached with lanterns. He called to them, and they came and relieved the pressure about his legs, waiting for him to climb out of the wreck.

"I don't know what's the matter," he said, painfully, "but I'm hurt somewhere. I can't move alone. Will you help me?"

He was raised and laid at one side upon the ground wet with dew. A flask was held to his lips, and a swallow from it revived his strength.

"Where are we?" he said. "Is there a telegraph office near?"

One of the men, who had remained for a minute beside him to see what care he might need, answered, "This is Bedford near by."

"I must get a telegram to the post-office—quickly. It is of the greatest importance."

"I'd make it short. They'll be busy enough to-night. Here!" the man called to a boy from a neighbouring farm-house. "My boy, you can make yourself useful. Here's a man who's been hurt, and wants to send a telegram. There'll be other errands you can do in town. The men are all needed here."

The boy, his face white and his eyes big with horror at the scene round him, came and stood by Tom, who had written the direction with difficulty, and was tearing the leaves from his note-book. Handing them to the boy, he said:

"Tell the man to send all he can of this before half-past two o'clock certain." Then he added, "Wait," and wrote hurriedly:

"The up express leaving Liverpool at a quarter-past seven struck a luggage train just north of Bedford and was completely wrecked."

A physician approached and stopped to look at Harding.

"Are you badly hurt?" he asked.

"I don't seem to be hurt externally," said Harding, "but sharp pains keep shooting through my body, and I can't move."

The physician, grave and compassionate, knelt, and, with quick, skilful touch, examined the young man. He asked a few questions, and shook his head sadly. The eager, brave young face, drawn with pain, interested and touched him.

Meanwhile Tom had made a few rapid inquiries of the doctor about the disaster, jotting them down to fill in his message. He then said, quietly:

"How is it with me, doctor?"

"Can you bear the truth?" asked the physician.

"Do you mean that I am going? Yes; I can bear it. How soon?"

"Very soon, I fear."

"Doctor, my name is Harding—Thomas Harding. I am a reporter for the *Daily Magnet*. I was on my way to London with an account of the labour troubles in Lancashire. It must be in the *Magnet* office before half-past two. Here I have scribbled a story of this accident. You've given me nearly everything but the names of the killed and wounded—I can't get those. Doctor, will you see that my paper has those names? Can I trouble you so much?"

Dr. May knew that he had a night of anxious work before him; but he could not refuse the pleading look in the boy's

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white face. The request, conveyed in those words, wrung out suffering, appearing so singular and extraordinary, and spoken rapidly, as by one whose life was short, and whose work was very important, moved him greatly.

"Yes," said the physician. "I will see that it is done."

"Oh, thank you, doctor!" Harding's voice had almost a ring of triumph in it. "Your name is——"

"May."

Tom added a few words to his despatch.

"Can't get list killed and wounded. Doctor May will send it. This is my last message. Tell mother. Good-bye.—Harding."

As the boy took the finished lines, Harding said—

"Tell the clerk I have left money with Doctor May to pay for hurrying this through. The *Magnet* will give anything for this report."

The doctor added a word to the boy, and hurried him off through the darkness.

"Doctor, you will find in my pocket-book money enough to meet all expenses. Take it and pay what should be paid. Never mind about me. Others need you more. I couldn't do anything else just now—I might as well do the best—I could—for my paper."

Harding's voice had sunk almost to a whisper, and he caught his breath painfully. Then his breath faltered, and died away altogether.

The work of caring for the wounded and dying went on round Tom's body, now left alone.

It was two o'clock in the morning in the office of the *Magnet*. The roll of the ponderous trucks overhead told that the first formes were being rushed down to the stereotyping room.

The telegraph attendant waited at his machine. The editor laid aside the last tiresome sheet of type-written paper, and looking through the window between his own and the telegraph room, asked if nothing had been heard from Lancashire—a question he had asked several times in the last hour.

The managing editor came in with a worried look on his face.

"Nothing from Lancashire?" he said. "What can be the matter with Harding? If he were not coming back to-night he would have wired long ago; and if he were coming, he would have been here before now."

Just then a reporter brought word of a bad accident to the northern express.

"Send down at once for particulars," said the managing editor.

"I have sent."

"Hold the wire open till the last minute," was the managing editor's next order. "Harding will be heard from yet."

Just then came the office call on the telegraph instrument. The clerk answered, and began to write. The managing editor leaned eagerly over his shoulder.

Handed in at Bedford? What did it mean? It appeared to be Harding's account of the Lancashire strike.

Page after page came rapidly from under the clerk's hand. The story was vivid, graphic, and complete.

The editor read it rapidly, sending it sheet by sheet to the composing room. At last the signature was reached.

"It is a swindle!" exclaimed the managing editor.

"Probably Tom was stopped by the accident, and had to send his account from Bedford," suggested the editor.

But the click of the instrument had begun again.

"Bedford, July 14th. The up-express, leaving Liverpool at a quarter-past seven, struck a luggage train just north of Bedford, and was completely wrecked."

Then followed the brief but vivid story of the accident, read eagerly and anxiously by the strong men who stood about the operator.

"Another 'fake!'" exclaimed the editor—and then stopped, for the last page was reached.

The clerk had grown white, and his hand twitched nervously as he laid down his pen, and touched the key. The managing editor was the first to read the sheet, with the ink still wet on its brave words.

"Can't get list of killed and wounded. Doctor May will send it. This is my last message. Tell mother. Good-bye. —Harding."

The managing editor dropped the sheet and turned away.

The *Magnet* that morning contained two special reports which attracted extraordinary attention. Contrary to the usual custom of the paper, both of these bore signatures, and in each case the name signed was that of Thomas Harding.

Above the telegram telling the story of the disaster, first in the death-roll that was anxiously scanned by so many eyes, stood the name of Thomas Harding, reporter.

That was all; but the world soon learned the story.

THE FALCONER OF ESTE.

ER name was Nerina. It was Travers' first evening in Italy.

San Remo, in the daytime, wore that look of lovely desolation which it is wont to assume after the breaking up of the winter colony. Travers, who had passed by Cannes, Nice, and Monte Carlo with scarce a regret, in his eagerness to cross the Italian frontier, paused now at the threshold of the promised land, because he had a letter of introduction from a Parisian artist friend, Lucien D'Aren, to present here.

The letter was addressed to the Count Chevandier-Waldron; but in reality the visit was for the sake of a young woman, who, while serving in the capacity of governess to the old Count's two little grandsons, was, in point of fact, a kind of adopted daughter of the house. She was Italian; but the history of her relation with the Chevandiers Travers had never learned. D'Aren had more than once intimated that her family connections in Italy were ancient and noble.

It was at a reception in the Chevandiers' Paris hotel that he had first met her, the autumn previous. He had run down to San Remo at Carnival time, some two months before the passing thither of his American friend. Now he was chained to the capital, having arrived at that critical point of his artistic career where the spark of patronage had at last faintly caught, and needed the most assiduous fanning to coax it into the promise of a comfortable surety. Hence his commission to Travers, *passant*.

That this commission was of a delicate and somewhat equivocal nature the young American comprehended; but D'Aren had volunteered few specific confidences—disappointed, possibly, that they had not been asked.

Being sufficiently occupied with affairs of his own, Travers did not avail himself of the privilege even of drawing conclusions as to those of his friend.

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Having forwarded his letter, he received at his hotel, an hour later, an invitation to a kind of informal reception to be held at the Chevandier villa that same evening as it chanced, in honour of a yachting party from Nice.

Thus he gained an opportunity to observe the Signorina herself, who had graciously acted as intermediary in the presentations.

Yes, she was beautiful, in the style cultivated by certain painters. Travers thought instantly of his friend's master, Lefebre, whose work is intensely modern, yet strongly imbued with mystic and classical suggestion. Nerina's charm, however, so far as the physical element of it was concerned, was not too subtle or elusive. It must have impressed itself upon every observer irrespective of individual predilections. She represented neither of the familiar contrasted Italian types of vaporous blonde and raven brunette.

Her complexion was a warm, bright olive colour; her rich hair was dark brown and straight; her eyes, two liquid, shining orbs, that by daylight were probably violet-grey. She was slender and rather tall, and moved with the lithe, rapid grace of a wild creature. What she wore that evening Travers could not afterwards recall, save that it was a simply-made gown of some dark, soft, clinging stuff that seemed a part of the wearer herself rather than an artificial vestment.

Here, thought Travers, was a rare type—an anachronism—an exquisite surviving product of ages of luxury and refinement, perhaps of something more sinister. Her features, her entire individuality, bore in a singular degree the cast of that pride of race, that legendary hauteur, which the young American had first observed with an involuntary thrill of admiration amongst those stately women of Arles and Avignon, who claim descent from antique Rome and Greece.

A Mascagni waltz drew most of the party into its bewitching vortex, and Travers found himself gliding with the rest over waxen floors. This was the providential prelude to a turn in the garden, which needed not even to be intimated by a word, for Nerina was his partner; and a moment later they were alone in the myrtle-bowered paths, beaconed rather than illuminated, by Chinese lanterns hanging here and there like glowing fruit amongst spicy laurel-rose shrubberies.

Paused to read the letter by the crimson light of a paper lantern.

Then, in her low, monotonous tones, yet with something of the delicious impetuosity of intimacy, she asked:

"Tell me what he said—Lucien, your friend. You have left him——."

"The day before yesterday, in Paris. Permit me—he can best speak for himself."

He gave her the letter, which, not to be intrusted to the hazards of the regular post, had been placed in his hands for safe delivery into her own. She touched it to her lips, then paused to read the letter by the crimson light of a paper lantern hanging in one of the dense laurel-trees overarching the path.

Travers was more than content to stand awhile in contemplation of the picture, keeping, at the same time, a watchful eye in the direction of the house, so as to be on guard against a possible interruption. Finally he said, for want of something better to break the spell:

"This is indeed *sub rosa!*"

Lifting her eyes from the letter, she regarded him fixedly, and answered, mixing as usual an Italian word or two with her somewhat halting French:

"He speaks *molto bene* of you."

"Thanks!" Travers cried joyously. "Do try and believe it. Lucien is the most charming fellow in the world, and deserves to be, as now I know he is, the happiest of men."

"He thinks of me sometimes?"

"More than sometimes. And it is *thinking*, with a difference."

"Then he has told you much about me?"

"Not so much. I am speaking now on my own responsibility."

"He will be coming here," she continued, glancing again at the letter. "And you, how long shall you remain in San Remo?"

"Only until to-morrow morning."

Something like a sigh accompanied this declaration. What sudden determination prompted it Travers could not have explained, nor why the utterance of it caused him a feeling of relief.

They were now at the open window-door of the salon, having retraced their steps as other promenaders came into the garden. It was necessary merely to show themselves for a moment indoors, and exchange a word or two with the host and those about him, then the pair were at liberty to resume their interview *al fresco*. This time they continued their walk to the foot of the garden, where a marble seat was placed in a dusky bower amidst a clump of pines and acacias.

"The attractions of San Remo then, are so quickly exhausted?" she asked, as though there had been no break in the conversation.

"On the contrary, it is the seduction of the place that I fear. If I were to yield to it now, perhaps I should never get any further; and there are some other places in Italy that I had set my heart upon visiting."

"Ah, yes! You will go to Florence——"

From the shadowy acacias a bird's nocturne gushed forth in such a rapture of melody, that the girl's own kindred voice as suddenly ceased its flow.

"There!" exclaimed her companion, at the fall of a cadence. "There is an example now of the fatal fascination to which a susceptible stranger is exposed here. That nightingale——"

"Oh, no!" she interrupted laughingly, "it is not the nightingale. That is the *caponero*—our little Italian fauvette, with the black bonnet and the golden throat, who makes many sweet songs for which the master-singer gets credit. That is unjust, for the nightingale has gifts and glory enough of his own. Now I will teach you to distinguish between them."

And forthwith she began imitating, in a sort of warbling whistle, the song of the bird in the acacias—so perfectly, that it seemed a continuation of that which had at first fallen so sweetly upon the dreamy darkness.

"And now," she continued, animated by her own ecstatic roulades, "you shall hear how the nightingale discourses. He doesn't repeat set phrases—he talks, improvises. He begins by coaxing you to listen, and then pours out his whole heart—so!"

It was indeed the nightingale's song, but with a soul in it

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that she gave. Then she imitated the haunting cry of the owl and half-a-dozen other birds—

"Most musical, most melancholy."

The performance of Nerina seemed really as marvellous as it was unique, and Travers scarcely knew how to express his appreciation and wonder.

"You are like the mocking-bird of the Southern wilds, in America," he said. "What an original accomplishment! I can't imagine how you came to acquire it."

"Oh, the birds taught me. We used to be neighbours, once upon a time. I understand them intimately."

"Do they understand you, I wonder?"

She arose quickly—not in consequence of his involuntary query, but, as he now perceived, because somebody was passing their nook. It was a solitary person, evidently, as his footfalls were almost inaudible, and the only visible indication of his passing was the glowing spark of a cigar-end. Yet the girl seemed to see clearly enough, or else it was intuition.

"It is M. Chevandier the younger—the old Count's son," she whispered. "He has just arrived from Nice. We must go in."

Travers was formally presented to M. Chevandier *fils*—the father of the two boys under Nerina's care. This virtually ended the visit, as it was plain that there would be no more *tête-à-tête* with the signorina that evening. She gave him, as he fancied, a significant pressure of the hand at parting.

He returned to his hotel to write to D'Aren, and could not but wonder at the unwonted restraint he felt in reporting to his friend the incidents and impressions of the evening. Early the next morning he took train for Genoa.

"Angel or syren?" was the query that kept reiterating itself in his mind. "Who knows—and who cares? Not I, forsooth. Whatever the burden of her song, my ears are sealed to it—not, indeed, as Ulysses' were, but with the ringing in them of the magic name—Italy! Italy!"

The olives shimmered in silver and grey shade. Here and there a sentinel cypress rose like a velvet plume. The breeze bore a strange thymy odour, and the sound of running waters was joyous, like singing. San Miniato, the Viale dei Colli, Fiesole, Vallombrosa, all that cluster of idyllic mountains which environ Florence and outline the Val d'Arno, lay lilac in light and purple in shadow, so softened, so transfigured in the gold-suffused atmosphere of the late afternoon, that the pale-faced villas on their terraced slopes, were more like phantasmal bits of cloud than realities of common day.

The point of view was the Bellosguardo, whither, in company with Professor Fiske, Travers had climbed to visit a renowned old Tuscan convent-fortress, the Certosa d'Ema.

Professor Fiske had been the most popular member of the faculty at University, in the young man's student days. With the tastes and habits of a scholar, he enjoyed the independence of wealth, so that of late years he had turned Florentine, to the delight of the cosmopolitan colony in winter, no less than of certain stray Britons in summer.

The two had paused by the grey ruined wall of Monte-Ajuto, that ancient stronghold of the Templars, when suddenly the Professor made a gesture enjoining silence, and whispered:

"I'll wager, there's Bebbo. The cunning rascal! Yes, it is he, sure enough."

"Who? What? Where?" asked the startled Travers.

"Bebbo, the bird-catcher. See—yonder, in the grass, by the big cypress-tree."

Travers looked in the direction indicated, but at first could perceive nothing animate save the innumerable little bright-eyed lizards that darted about or peered curiously out from the luxuriant herbage. Then suddenly he became aware of the figure of a man, crouching, or rather lying full length, amongst some weed-grown fragments of carved stone, a few rods distant.

"He is well worth your attention," continued the professor, "for he is a character unique in Florence, and, so far as I know in all Italy. He is a bird charmer, is Bebbo—a veritable *uccelliere* of the middle ages—*a birdsman*, of a race practically extinct for centuries past, who lives solely by birds, *with* and *for* birds. Thanks to his diabolical snares and nets, his silent spring gun, his trained wolfish dog of the Maremma, his imitative whistles and calls, and I don't know how many other marvellously ingenious contrivances of his own, this fellow has wrought more devastation among the game and singing birds of the country hereabouts than any hundred ordinary fowlers."

Travers' curiosity was piqued, and he imitated his friend's caution as they approached the spot where Bebbo lay.

Bebbo was not asleep; on the contrary, he was intensely awake, though motionless as a graven image.

"Good-day to your lordships," he said courteously, but without raising his eyes or relaxing the fine cord which, wound thrice about his hand, passed along the mossy turf and out of sight in the distance. Nor did he drop the spray of aromatic flowers held between his teeth, and upon which he gently ruminated, as another might have done with a cigar or pipe. In place of a hat, the cowl-like hood of a *lucco*—the classic Florentine head-dress—covered his iron-grey curls and mysteriously shadowed his face.

And what an extraordinary face was that! Travers was at a loss to define the singular impression the sight of it made upon him, until the professor said, later:

"You see in Bebbo a direct descendant of the falconers of the House of Este."

Again there flashed across the young American's mind the thought of that occult, avatar-like transmission of physical, no less than psychical, traits across the abyss of centuries, which he had more than once fancied he discovered in these old lands of romance and mythology. This inscrutable birdsman, with his slight, lithe frame and keen features, his hook-nose, like the beak of a vulture, and the fascinating fixity of his large, round, *yellow* eyes, was he not the living embodiment of the Greek faun, or satyr? Doubtless his hood concealed a pair of pointed ears.

When Bebbo replied to the badinage which the Professor, with the freedom of long acquaintance, presently directed against him, it was with a keen, Attic wit, coupled with an almost insolent imperturbability; while his language, far from being flavoured with the local *patois*, seemed actually Archaic in its purity. It was, the Professor declared, like his signature, which, scrawled in great Gothic characters with an eagle's quill, resembled the sign-manual of a grand seigneur of the fifteenth century.

"And how is it with the birds to-day, Master Bebbo?"

"Dio mio! the birds? There are no more in Italy, Signor Professore. Ah! it goes very badly."

"No more birds, eh? Well, and who is to blame for that, if not yourself? But, of course, you are lying, as usual. Let us see what you have caught."

"Oh, nothing at all, signor; nothing worth speaking about."

"Show us, at all events," insisted the Professor.

"Gesù m'aiuta! Wait a moment. Keep quiet, gentlemen; don't stir. Look! the net, yonder. Via!"

Bebbo gave a sharp pull at the cord he was holding, and lo! a hundred yards distant, a net which the two strangers had not hitherto perceived closed upon the ground like magic, enmeshing a whole flock of downy, fluttering creatures.

"That makes eleven more," he said, looking up with his malevolent smile.

There were, in fact, just eleven birds—mostly linnets and goldfinches—in the net; and Bebbo removed them with the utmost adroitness, transferring them one at a time, without ruffling a feather, to the compartments of a pair of large cages which he kept covered with a russet basket. Here were scores of other winged captives of various species, including finches, fauvettes, redbreasts, larks, and some less familiar birds, known only to their captor.

"The pity of it!" exclaimed Travers; and his companion repeated his remark in Italian.

"Oh, it is not at my hands they suffer," retorted Bebbo. "I don't blind them."

"Blind them? Is it possible such barbarous cruelty can be practised upon these poor little creatures?"

"*Dio mio!* such is the custom—and custom, you know, goes

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a long way in this country. Yes, the best singers, such as the nightingales, are often deprived of their sight, as otherwise it would be difficult to make them sing in captivity.

"In fact, the grand seigneurs of former times used to cause them to be *stimulated* by having musical instruments played in their hearing. You remember, Signor Professore, the engravings of Tempesta and of Villamena, in my rare edition of Pietro Olina's 'Uccelliera,' Roma, 1622? The prick of a red-hot needle, or a drop of boiling oil in the bird's eye, and it's all over. Thenceforth, your nightingale can sing to his heart's content, night or day, always fancying himself in the deepest shadows of the forest *Ecco!* You have heard the Pope's choir in the Sistine Chapel, eh? But, as for me, I am content merely to catch the birds and teach them pretty airs. And then, after all, I must live, *poverino Bebbo!*"

"*Poverino Bebbo*, indeed! Why, you scoundrel, how about the two houses they say you own and let? And your vineyard down the Arno, yonder?"

For all the answer, the falconer of the East turned to his bird-cages and began to whistle ironically, imitating successively the singing blackbird, the thrush, the red and the grey partridge, the skylark, the cuckoo, the aziola owl, the nightingale, and, finally, the *caponero*—all with amazing ease and fidelity.

Travers recalled the "lesson" of Nerina at San Remo, and asked his friend:

"Is this sort of think a common acquirement in Italy?"

"Hardly," was the Professor's reply. "In fact, it is safe to say that, in his mastery of this, as of the other branches of his profession, Bebbo is unique."

"But I have already heard another such performance of bird imitation, and, in my judgment, it was not less perfect than this of Bebbo's."

"Then it must have been by a pupil of his; for in the domain of bird-lore there can be but one—the original and inimitable Bebbo. You shall decide for yourself, if I can draw him out a bit."

By force of judicious compliments and leading questions, Professor Fiske succeeded in breaking through the professional reserve of the Florentine, who explained the construction and operation of some of his most effective nets, the trapping of birds with the aid of a decoy, etc. He said, moreover, that the trouble of catching the birds was as nothing compared with the subsequent care and rearing of them—the putting in cage, watching their moultings and maladies, "stimulating" them to sing, preparing their *pasta*, and a hundred other attentions demanding science and skill.

At the same time, Bebbo was plainly becoming restive under the questionings of his visitors, and cast frequent glances in the direction of the net, which he had promptly reset. The hour, too, was growing late.

The professor and Travers turned their faces cityward, and, as they descended the winding route, the former resumed:

"I always endeavour to hold converse with Bebbo in something like his own fashion—it is the only way to get on with him. And yet, although we have been acquainted now for several years, I have never been able to make any further progress with him than what you have just witnessed. Perhaps, as you say, he is a belated faun, a sort of surviving devotee of Pan. Certain it is that he passes his time, for the most part, as we have just seen him, roving from hill to hill, from *boschetto* to *boschetto*, from the Arno valley to the top of the Apennines. And he appears to possess a physical constitution quite distinct from that common humanity, rendering him superbly indifferent to changing skies and seasons, to midnight moons and moistening dews, to all the innumerable hazards of his calling.

"Yet all this represents only one side of his complex character. Dreamer, sceptic and voluptuary that he is at heart, he has accumulated a fund of cynical-philosophic reflections which furnish him with sharp and ever-ready repartee. You remember his observation to-day, when I taxed him with cruelty: 'Cruel—barbarous?' he repeated. 'No more so than the gardener who cuts his roses, the farmer who reaps his grain, *or the king who mows down men!*'" His erudition is such that he can quote you epicurean verses from Ovid and Horace, or cite approbatory texts from the Uccelliera of Pope Gregory XV.—'Given at Rome, at Santa Maria Maggiore, under the seal of the fisher—*sub annulo piscatoris*—the eighth day of November, 1521, of our Pontificate, Anno I.'

"What with his field-craft and bird-lore, his knowledge of nature and men, and his independent habits, Bebbo has lived well and joyously, not to say voluptuously. If certain old women's gossip hereabout be true, our bird-charmer has been a wild gallant in his day. In fact, the romance of Bebbo's daughter comes down to my own time here in Florence—and a sinister enough romance it was, too."

"Bebbo's daughter! He has a daughter, then?" questioned Travers, who had listened with growing eagerness to the Professor's narrative.

"He *had* until about three years ago. That is to say, there was a superb, spirited young creature whom Bebbo had mysteriously brought to Florence as an infant. She was generally known as his daughter. He occupied himself with her education—it was his only extravagance. The crafty birdsman saw in the girl a rare decoy; and she would have been sold—that is to say, married—to a rich old sybarite, the Prince D——, immediately upon leaving her convent, had she not suddenly taken flight. She was a match for Bebbo himself in wit and *finesse*, and she found a protector—some say a lover—in a distinguished family of *forestieri* who was ministering here. Since then, not a word, not a trace of her. But Bebbo's vengeful hatred, none can doubt, will last as long as he does."

"What would he do, if he were to find her?"

"He would kill her—perhaps do away with her by means of one of those subtle and deadly poisons he knows so well how to distil. She would have no more chance for her life than a bird in his snare."

The Professor said this with such an air of settled conviction, and it formed so startling a climax to the preceding revelations, that Travers excitedly confided to him the story of Lucien D'Aren's love affair, and his own encounter with Nerina at San Remo.

"Now, what ought I to do, under the circumstances?" he asked in conclusion. "If I should go and tell D'Aren?"

The elder man looked into his eyes before replying—

"My dear boy, M. D'Aren is your friend, and you are mine. I couldn't think of interposing an offhand opinion, in a case like this. Reflect over the matter by yourself until the next time we meet, and then tell me if you really want it."

Two days later, Travers, on the eve of departure from Florence, sought out his friend and thanked him cordially for the advice he had *not* given.

"It is clear enough to me now," he said. "The fact that I have stumbled upon a combination of circumstances is no reason why I should never mention the falconer of Este. Yet, surely, Professor, this dilemma is a peculiar one for a loyal friend to be placed in. I never heard of anyone else adopting precisely this course."

"Naturally. You hear of it only when they do the reverse. Leaving heaven out of the count, there are more things in this world, Horatio, than ever were dreamt of in your social philosophy. Adieu! You will find compensation for your forbearance, it may be, in watching your mystery work itself out."

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THE OUTLAWS OF THE AIR.

By GEORGE GRIFFITH,

Author of "The Angel of the Revolution," "The Syren of the Skies, &c."

SUMMARY.

MAX RENAULT—leading spirit of Anarchist Autonomie Group No. 7, who has joined the Utopians (a Socialist colony on an island in the South Pacific) in order to steal the air-ship they are building, which he succeeds in doing.

FRANZ HARTOG—a German engineer, in league with Renault, who steals a very fast torpedo-boat destroyer from the Russian Government to levy blackmail on the Atlantic.

SIR HARRY MILTON—a wealthy young English nobleman, who by chance comes across the island of Utopia, and subsequently devotes the whole of his fortune to hunting down Renault and Hartog.

HERBERT WYNDHAM—a lieutenant in the British Navy who is travelling with Sir Harry for the benefit of his health, and who resigns his commission and couples his energies with those of Sir Harry in destroying the Anarchists, on account of the fact that he has been stabbed by Renault when the latter attempts to carry off Violet in the air-ship.

FREDERICK AUSTEN—the inventor of the Utopian air-ship, who shares its secret with Edward Adams, Dr. Edwards, and Ambrose Millar, three other Utopians.

VIOLET MILTON—Sir Harry's sister, and Lieutenant Wyndham's sweetheart, is permanently crippled by throwing herself out of the air-ship on which Renault has tried to carry her off.

DORA MERTON—a fair Utopian, who has made an impression on Sir Harry.

LUCY SUMMERS—another fair Utopian.

Max Renault has made his way to New York Harbour on the air-ship and sees four huge liners start in a fleet, under convoy of two cruisers and four torpedo boats. He follows them, and on the second night Hartog appears upon the scene in his fast torpedo boat, the *Destroyer*, and commences to attack.

With the flames showing a yard above their funnels.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE "DESTROYER" AT WORK.

IT was of course impossible for Renault to see whether or not the broadside fired from the cruiser had taken any effect on the flying *Destroyer*, given that the assailant who had so mysteriously disabled the two torpedo boats was, as was most probable, the now famous pirate craft. Moving, as she would do, at a speed of some twelve hundred yards a minute, the searchlights had no sooner picked her up than they lost her again, and, as the night, although calm and cold, was now rather thick, the electric rays had only a short range, and a very few moments would take her beyond their radius.

For nearly half-an-hour he watched with interest that fast intensified into anxiety as nothing further happened. The *Gigantic* had slowed down, and he could see from the moving lights on her deck that she was getting her own guns ready for action. The cruiser, after picking up the crews of the sinking torpedo boats, had overtaken her and exchanged signals with her, and the other members of the flotilla were rapidly coming up astern.

Still cursing the lack of weapons which made him a helpless spectator of the drama which had already become a tragedy, he was just beginning to fear that the war-ship's broadside had blown the *Destroyer* out of the water when he saw a quick, pale flash to the northward, followed by the outburst of a sphere of brilliant flame on the cruiser's deck. By the momentary blaze of light he saw human forms hurled in all directions prone on her upper deck. Then came, almost immediately afterwards, the short, sharp bang of the explosion.

Then long streams of flame burst out from her side and the roar of a second broadside mounted to his ears. Hardly had it died away than another pale flash gleamed out from the northward, fully a thousand yards from where the first had shown, and a moment later a second shell burst on the cruiser's deck, this time square between her funnels.

"Bravo, friend Franz!" cried Max in his conning-tower, "they haven't hit you yet and you've hit them twice. That's something like shooting! There goes another broadside. Missed him again, of course. Who could hit a thing they can't see and which doesn't stop in the same place two seconds together? Fancy the little *Destroyer* tackling a big cruiser and a couple of torpedo boats like that. It's just the sort of daring that commands success.

"Ha! there's the other fellow coming into action. They'll try to head him off between them, I suppose. I wonder what the other two torpedo boats are up to. Ah, there they are, running out to the northward full speed, with the flames showing a yard above their funnels. Good to shoot at that, I should think; and Franz hasn't shown a light or a spark of flame yet except from his guns.

"Ah, there he is again! That second cruiser's searchlight just got him for an instant. Cæsar, what a speed he's going at! Forty knots if it's a yard. Another broadside—blaze away, *mes amis*, you're only firing into the sea. Hullo, what's that? One of the torpedo boats gone. He's rammed her, I suppose. Only one lot of flames now. Bang—there goes the other one. Blown her clean out of the water.

"I wonder what those shells of Franz's are. He doesn't need to strike twice with them, anyhow. I'd give something for a handy gun and a few of them up here. Wouldn't I give those two cruisers fits, firing down on their deck without their being able to send a shot back! Yes, that'll be something like business when we can do that. I wonder what he's up to now. Vanished again. He's picked his night well with this haze; those search-lights don't show anything half a mile off, and that gun of his carries a good two miles.

"Ha! there he is again, south of them now. He's sailed

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half round them while they've been wondering where he was. That was a nasty one for cruiser number two. Smashed up her forward funnel, as far as I can see. That'll knock a knot or two off her speed. I'll be hanged if I don't think he'll smash the pair of them up before daylight."

Extraordinary as it seemed, the running commentary that Max kept up in describing to himself the fight that was going on beneath him was not very far from the sober truth. Overwhelming as the numerical odds were against him, the pirate had one enormous advantage over his adversaries. In the nature of the case they were forced to keep their lights going to guard against a sudden rush and a torpedo attack, which, if successful, would send them to the bottom in ten minutes.

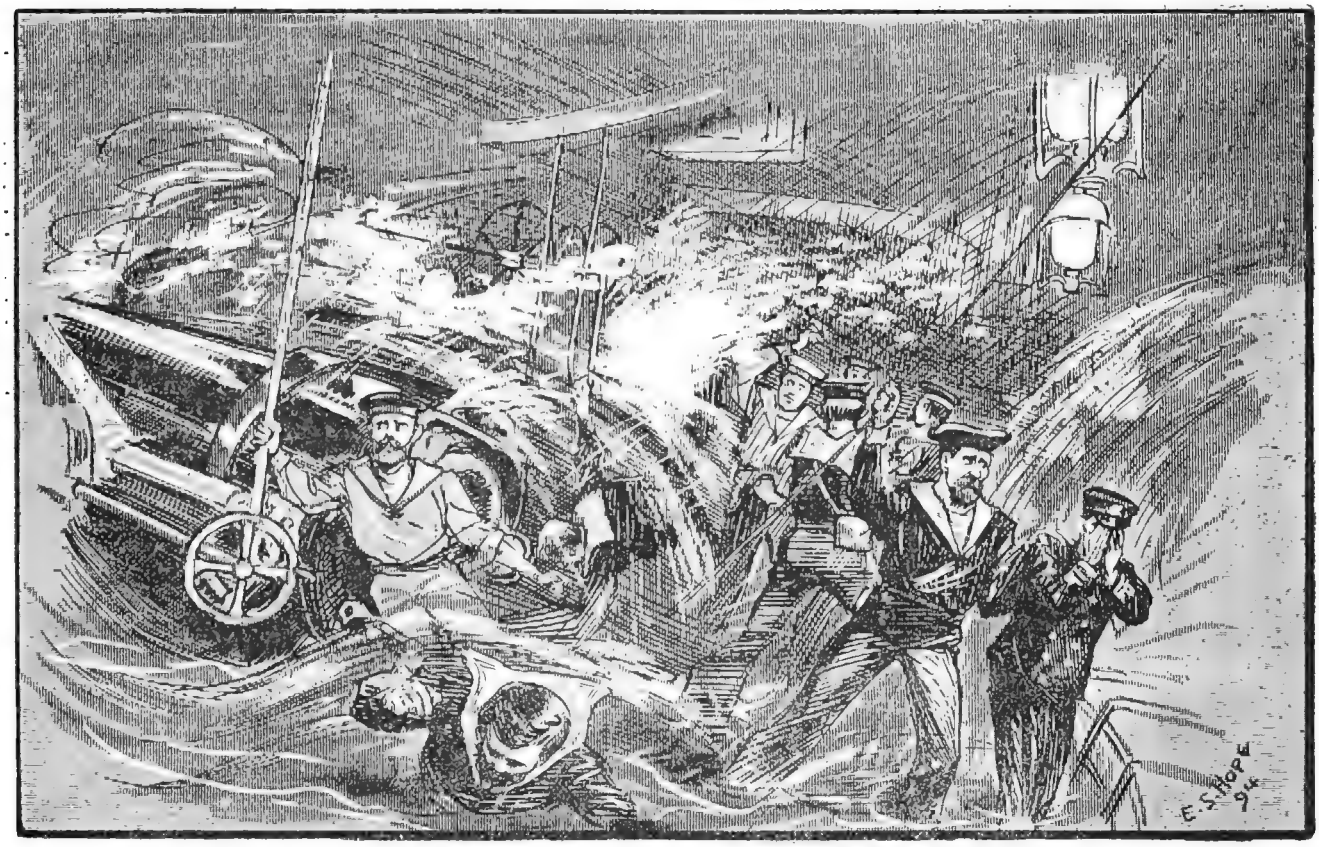
This made them conspicuous marks for his guns, which were evidently of considerable range and wonderful accuracy, while he, showing no lights, and moving through the water at nearly twice their highest speed, could laugh at their heavy broadsides with impunity. It was, of course, exasperatingly humiliating to the commanders of the warships, but there was no help for it. Shell after shell of tremendous explosive energy, considering their size, was fired into them, never twice from the same position, and they could only shoot at random into the darkness in reply.

None of the liners had been touched, but before the fight had been going on for an hour the two cruisers were practically *hors de combat*. Their decks were little better than shambles, their funnels and steam-pipes were twisted and battered into uselessness, and, worse than all, their searchlights extinguished. One after the other the well-aimed shells had smashed the projectors to atoms and left the warships defenceless against the deadliest attack of all.

"There goes a torpedo home at last!" cried Max in a tone of savage exultation as a dull roar came up from the surface of the water and the few remaining lights of the first cruiser swerved slowly to one side and then one by one disappeared. That was all he saw, but it meant a tragedy in which five hundred gallant fellows lost their lives in the space of a few minutes, most of them drowned like rats in a trap as the great ship went down nearly broken in two by the explosion of the terrible missile which had come out of the darkness to strike its irresistible blow.

The second cruiser was now near enough to see the catastrophe that had overwhelmed her unhappy consort. Her searchlights were instantly concentrated in a broad fan of light which overspread the area of swirling eddies sprinkled with life-buoys, hen-coops, overturned boats, and odds and ends of flotsam and scores of struggling forms of men making a last struggle for life.

In two minutes her boats were in the water and pulling hard on their errand of mercy. But here they had reckoned without the pitiless ferocity of their invisible assailant. This was just the opportunity that the pirates had counted on to enable them to complete their triumph in the strangely unequal battle in which speed, cunning, and dexterity had so hopelessly outmatched a force apparently so vastly superior.



Most of them drowned like rats in a trap.

No sooner did the searchlights betray the position of the second cruiser than shell after shell came up out of the darkness, never twice from the same point of the compass, and burst in her upper works, shattering her projectors, and spreading death and ruin about her decks. So rapidly did they come and so widely distant were the points of fire that it seemed as though the pirates numbered three or four instead of only one vessel Before the work of rescue was nearly accomplished the cruiser had been put into total darkness, and was unable to show a single ray of light that would have enabled her crew to guard against the last deadly assault that was now inevitable.

Rashly enough, the American liner began to use her projector in the hope of picking up the pirate and making it possible to pour the united fire of the five vessels on her,

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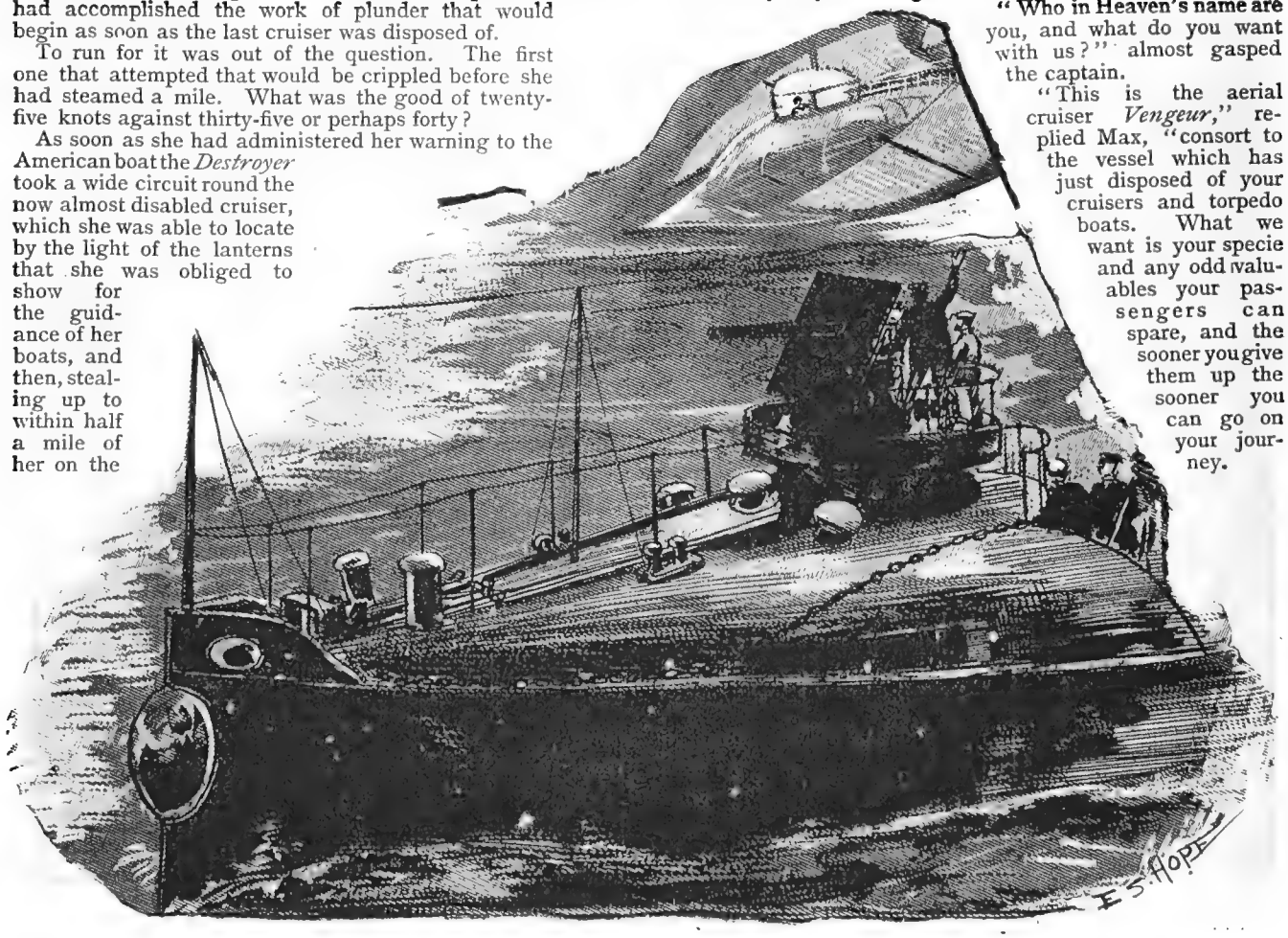
but the moment the electric ray gleamed out a shell, fired almost at right angles to the beam, pierced her thin plates and exploded, as ill-luck would have it, in her engine-room and burst the steam-pipe of her starboard engine. A moment later a hail of six-ounce shot from a machine gun crumpled up her projector, and the other boats, taking the hint, abstained from showing their lights.

It was hard, but it was necessary. Armed and all as they were, it was quite impossible for the liners to fight under the circumstances. The captain of each of them was responsible for more than a thousand lives, and the unseen enemy had by this time conclusively proved that he could sink them one by one without giving them a chance to retaliate. All they could do was to wait and hope that the morning would bring help that would compel the retreat of the pirate before he had accomplished the work of plunder that would begin as soon as the last cruiser was disposed of.

To run for it was out of the question. The first one that attempted that would be crippled before she had steamed a mile. What was the good of twenty-five knots against thirty-five or perhaps forty?

As soon as she had administered her warning to the American boat the *Destroyer* took a wide circuit round the now almost disabled cruiser, which she was able to locate by the light of the lanterns that she was obliged to show for the guidance of her boats, and then, stealing up to within half a mile of her on the opposite side, turned round, backed slowly up for another hundred yards or so, and deliberately discharged her two stern torpedoes at her.



"'*Destroyer*,' ahoy!

The aim was carefully taken, and both the missiles took effect, one under the quarter and the other under the side. The roar of the combined explosions told those in the boats and on board the liners that the last fatal blow had been struck, and that the four big ships, with all the lives and treasure on board of them, now lay practically at the mercy of the pirates.

"Splendidly fought, *mon brave Franz!*" exclaimed Max as the sorely stricken warship literally doubled up and went down like a mass of iron plunged into the water. "That ends the fighting part of the business, I should think. Now I fancy I can do something for you. A little timely bravado will make those four liners deliver themselves into our hands as tamely as though they hadn't a gun on board."

Five minutes after he had said this to himself the officers and crew of the *Gigantic*—all the passengers had of course been sent below long ago—were almost paralysed with amazement, not altogether unmixed with fear, by the apparition of a huge floating shape which suddenly dropped from the clouds and darkness over their heads and flashed a blinding dazzling ray of light down on her deck. It moved to and fro for a moment or two and then stopped over the bridge on which the bewildered captain was standing staring upwards in the midst of a group of his equally bewildered officers.

"Steam to the northward and signal to your consorts to do the same at ten knots. Quick, or I'll sink you where you lie. Do as I tell and every life shall be spared, and when we've done with you, you shall go in peace."

"Who in Heaven's name are you, and what do you want with us?" almost gasped the captain.

"This is the aerial cruiser *Vengeur*," replied Max, "consort to the vessel which has just disposed of your cruisers and torpedo boats. What we want is your specie and any odd valuables your passengers can spare, and the sooner you give them up the sooner you can go on your journey.

"Now which is it—surrender or fight?"

To those on board the *Gigantic* the question was the merest mockery. How could there be any possible alternative to surrender for them now that the terrible assailant that had destroyed their protectors one by one had been joined by this mysterious and seemingly still more terrible auxiliary from the air? For all they knew some at least of the shells which had crippled the two cruisers had been hurled upon them from the clouds by this hitherto unseen enemy.

But even more potent than this conviction was the bewilderment, amounting almost to stupefaction with which they found themselves confronted under such fearful circumstances and without the slightest warning by the greatest mechanical triumph of all the ages, that wonderful machine of which men had dreamt vainly for centuries, in the hands of the avowed enemies of society.

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"Fight!" exclaimed the captain of the *Gigantic*, in a tone in which wonder and disgust were about equally blended, "how can we fight? Make the course north, Mr. Thomson," he continued to his chief officer. "It's no good. We must think of the lives of the passengers first. That fellow could blow us to bits at his ease and we couldn't touch him with a shot. A whole fleet couldn't fight an air ship, and that's one, there's no doubt about it. It's horrible, but there's nothing else to do. We're helpless. Put the helm over."

"I'm glad to see you take such a sensible view of the situation, Captain," said Renault, as he saw the great liner swing round to the northward in obedience to his order. "You have saved a needless slaughter that I should have regretted very much. Can you signal to the others to follow you, as I asked you to do?"

"No," shortly replied the Captain, "I can't; and if I could, they mightn't obey me."

"Very well," said Max, "then I'll go and tell them what to do myself. Keep due north, and mind, if you fire a gun or attempt to make a signal I'll blow you out of the water."

While this conversation was going on the *Destroyer* had prudently kept out of sight. Franz Hartog, who was in command of her, startled as he at first was by the sudden and unexpected appearance of the air-ship, was not long in coming to the conclusion, from what he saw, that she could only be the long-expected craft which Max had promised to bring from Utopia nearly four years before. Why he had taken no part in the battle until now he could not understand, but he was quite content to wait for an explanation, and that he very soon got. He exhibited a flash-light for an instant, and Max, divining his intention, swooped down to where he was lying a couple of miles astern of the *Gigantic*.

"*Destroyer*, ahoy!" he sang out as the *Vengeur* sank gently down to the surface of the water alongside the dim grey shape of the pirate craft, "Is Franz Hartog on board?"

"Ja, mein lieber Max, he is here," replied a familiar voice. "And is dot you at last mit der air-ship? I always said you vould come some time, but you haf been der teufel's own time coming, and vy der donnerwetter didn't you help us to smash up dem cruisers ven you haf a beautiful air-ship like dot—and, mein Gott, she is a beauty, vot I can see of her?"

"Because I couldn't, Franz," laughed Max in reply. "I haven't a gun or a shell on board. I had to come away in a hurry with this thing or I shouldn't have got her at all. I've nothing better than a rifle and a revolver with me, and they wouldn't be much good, but those fellows don't know that, so I've told the big one to steer off due north at ten knots and not fire a shot or make a signal or I'll blow him to bits. He believed me, and he's doing as I told him. Now I'm going to tell the others the same thing. Can you spare me a few shells just to convince them with in case they don't see the force of the argument?"

"Ja, mein friend, you can haf as many as you like," replied the little German, delighted at the idea of Renault's ruse. "Dere is nothing like cheek in fighting—unless it is goot machinery and guns. By tam! they could haf clipped your wings for you, if they had only known. Come as close as you can and we vill pass you der shells up. Gott, vat a beautiful ship! Ven ve gets a few more like her ve vill gif someones fits and no mistake."

Max brought the *Vengeur* down lower still until a sliding door in her hull amidships was level with the bridge of the *Destroyer*, and through this a couple of dozen twelve-pounder percussion shells were rapidly passed to him.

"Do you vant a man or two to help you?" asked Franz, when the operation had been completed.

"No, thanks," replied Max, "they wouldn't be any use yet. They wouldn't understand the way of working things, and I do. Good-bye for the present. I think we'd better run these fellows due north till daylight to get them out of the track of the other ships and then unload the stuff at our leisure where we shan't be interrupted. What do you think?"

"Ja, dat is goot," said Hartog approvingly, "I haf been wondering all night how der teufel ve vas going to do it, but now you haf come it is all right. I tink ve had better take one of dem with us. Ve vant a transport to carry ze plunder. Dot North German boat vill be useful, she can steam twenty-two knots in a hurry."

"Very well," replied Max, "we can arrange that later on. Now I'll get away and start them off. Good-bye for the present."

"Goot-bye—auf wiedersehn!" cried Franz, as the *Vengeur* slowly soared upwards, and melted away into the gloom. "Mein Gott, vat a beautiful ship! Vait till ve get a fleet like her, and donnerwetter, vont ve vake de vorld up a bit and make it see some snakes! Ah, dot vill be a goot and a glorious time. Half speed ahead dere, and let us get dose fellows into marching order."

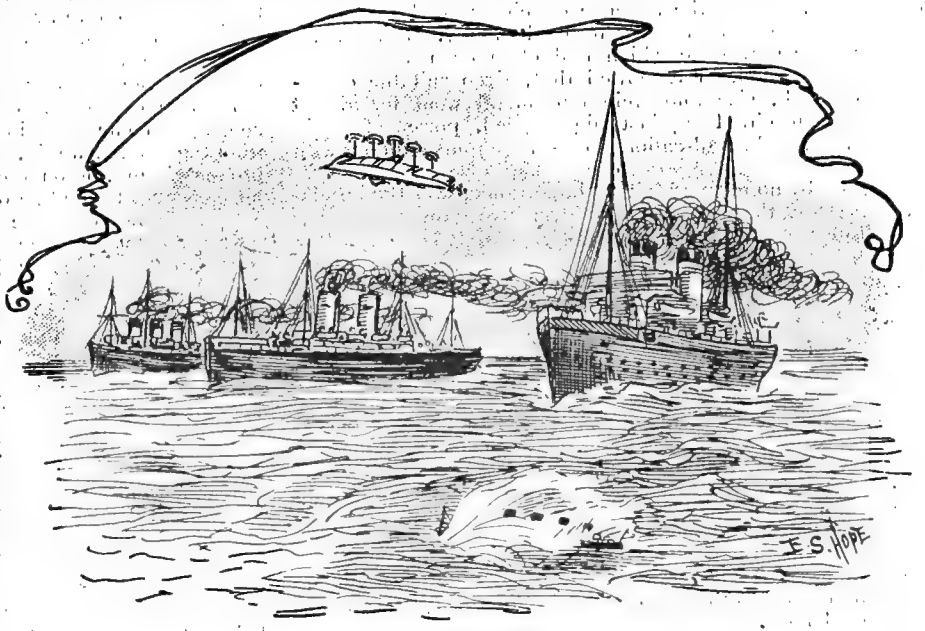
CHAPTER XIV.

THE EXPLOIT AND ITS MORAL.

HALF speed with the *Destroyer* meant something like eighteen knots an hour, so it didn't take very long for her to run round the other three liners, the crews of which had already been thrown into a condition bordering on panic by the astounding vision of the air-ship coming towards them with her single brilliant ray of light projected almost vertically downwards.

The first on whose decks it fell was the Cunarder *Morania*, a big boat built on the model of the *Lucania* and *Campania*, but with triple screws and a speed of twenty-four knots, or rather more than half a knot less than that of her huge rival the *Gigantic*. The same orders were given to her as had been given to the White Star boat, and perforce obeyed under similar compulsion.

Then the *Vengeur* visited in turn the American and North German boats, and within twenty minutes the four captured liners were on their way northward, at ten knots, the highest speed that the crippled American boat could make, with the *Vengeur* flying to and fro in a zigzag course over their mast-heads and the *Destroyer* bringing up the rear about half a mile astern. No lights were permitted, and, of course, none were shown by the captors.



The liners were halted.

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It was now a few minutes after one in the morning, and therefore, as the sun would not rise till ten minutes past eight, they had seven hours' steaming before daylight, enough to carry them well northward of the winter tracks of all the Trans-Atlantic lines, excepting that of Halifax to Liverpool. Twenty miles south of this track the flotilla was halted, and the American boat was ordered to tranship her specie and valuables to the North German liner *Bremen*, the smallest of the four, but a fast, handy boat, which the pirates had decided to take as their transport for the time being.

The *Destroyer* put a dozen men armed to the teeth on board the American boat to watch the transhipment of the specie and to collect the money and valuables which the passengers were compelled to surrender. The fate of the *New York* was still too fresh in their memories for anyone to dream of resistance. The transfer was rapidly and quietly effected, and then the half-disabled boat was dismissed to make the best of her way to port. The other three were then ordered to resume the northward course at the highest speed of which the *Bremen* was capable—that is to say, about twenty-two and a half knots.

Morning at length broke grey and dull and cold over a sea on which not a sail or a smoke cloud was visible. By mid-day on the 6th they had reached a region which is totally unfrequented from the beginning of the winter to the end, and which is only traversed even in summer by the Greenland whalers and a few adventurous yachts.

Here the liners were halted and ordered to bank their fires, so that as little smoke as possible might show from their funnels. The specie and everything that was worth taking was transhipped from the *Gigantic* and the *Morania* to the *Bremen*, and the passengers and officers of the North German boat were divided between the Cunarder and the White Star liner, and these two, after their guns had been rendered useless, and their ammunition taken out of them, were allowed to depart in peace, which they promptly did at full speed to the eastward.

Thus was accomplished, as the newspapers put it when the amazing story was made public, the greatest, the most daring, and the most successful act of piracy ever perpetrated on the high seas. A single small vessel had deliberately waylaid four of the swiftest and largest liners on the Atlantic, convoyed by two powerful cruisers and four torpedo boats. She had rammed three of the torpedo boats and sunk the fourth with a well-aimed shell, and, after practically disabling the two warships, she had torpedoed and sunk them.

This astonishing result had been achieved by pure skill and daring assisted by far superior speed, straight shooting, and dexterity of handling, combined with the enormous advantage of invisibility due to the absence of either smoke or flame from the *Destroyer's* furnaces, if she had any. It formed a lesson in naval warfare which had often been taught and mainly disregarded, for it showed that, given suitable conditions of attack, size and weight of metal went for almost nothing when pitted against high speed, power of rapid manœuvring, and small-calibre long-range guns handled with precision.

Last, but by no means least in importance, was the unmistakable proof that it gave of the positive danger of using searchlights save under very special conditions. The *Destroyer* had been able to cripple and to sink the two cruisers one after the other simply because she had been able to remain invisible outside the range of their lights and shell them at her leisure, while she herself remained invisible save for the brief pale flash of her guns.

But even this last exploit of the now dreaded pirate was of secondary interest to the world in comparison with the story which the two liners took home about the appearance of the air-ship which had come upon the scene of action so opportunely for the pirates.

For several years past the problem of aerial navigation had been assuming larger and more definite proportions. It had advanced from the realm of dreaming and theory into that of practical work. Eminent scientists had soberly discussed it, and distinguished inventors had spent thousands of pounds and years of time in the effort to reduce the theory to concrete mechanical form.

Quite recently distinct and undeniable success had rewarded their efforts, and now—to the dismay no less than to the disgust of everybody; of the inventors who saw themselves outstripped in the race; the public, which accepted with all the avidity of alarm the newspaper forecasts of calamities to come; and the Government whose permanent officials had jealously and doggedly thwarted and discouraged all attempts to obtain the encouragement and support of the State for the most important of all warlike researches—the world was suddenly and without the slightest warning confronted with the realisation of the long-sought ideal in the shape of an almost irresistible engine of warfare in the hands of the most implacable enemies that Society had ever bred in its slums or let loose from its goals.

The pirates, or Anarchists, as they were variously called in the papers of the day, had proved themselves more than sufficiently formidable with the one incomparable sea-going craft which had just inflicted its last and bitterest humiliation on those who had undertaken to safeguard the Atlantic traffic. But what, asked the leader writers of a hundred journals, from the *Times* itself down to the suburban local with its circulation of five hundred copies a week—what was to happen now that, having proved themselves uncatchable, and to all intents and purposes irresistible upon the water, they had invaded and conquered the regions of the air as well?

What new reign of terror was Society about to be subjected to? What was to become of crowded centres of population when their swarming millions should lie helpless beneath the indescribable horrors of a bombardment from the clouds by an enemy that could be expected to obey neither the rules of modern warfare nor the promptings of common humanity? Was there a weapon or a machine in existence that would enable Society to effectively reply to the attack which might now be made upon it any day without warning?

The question was asked universally and had to be answered with a direct and unanimous negative. The nearest approach to anything like an air-ship was Mr. Hiram Maxim's aeroplane. Indeed, saving the mysterious craft in the possession of the Anarchists, it was the only flying machine that had ever taken a flight through the air and come down again safe and sound.

But as soon as its actual performances came to be contrasted with what had been actually seen of the *Vengeur* from the decks of the liners, the difference between the mere flying machine and the really navigable cruiser of the air became strikingly and ominously apparent.

The aeroplane would rise from the earth, but only after a lengthy run on railway metals or quite level unobstructed ground. Its flights had been limited in height and confined to a comparatively small radius by conditions of fuel. It was totally unable to hover or soar, and the moment it ceased to move at a certain speed it began to descend; and, lastly, it could only come down in certain places if it was ever to rise from the ground again. To descend in a forest or on rough broken ground, or on the water, meant to stop there and fall an easy prey to the first enemy that attacked it.

On the other hand, the *Vengeur* could soar vertically, remain suspended and motionless in the air, sink to the surface of the water and rise again, and fly to and fro at such a speed that it easily kept pace with the liners steaming at twenty-two knots an hour, flying to and fro over their mastheads, and occasionally soaring up to a height of two and three thousand feet to search the horizon for vessels.

Of the efficiency of her armament, whatever it was, no proof had, it is true, been given, but even if she was only armed with tubes for dropping bombs and a few machine guns, she was obviously so far superior to the aeroplane that it would be sheer madness to pit it against her as an adversary. Thus, as a weapon of defence, the flying machine could only be ignored. To match it against a craft like the *Vengeur* would be as absurd as it would be to send an old-fashioned ten-gun sailing brig to fight the newest type of torpedo destroyer.

Of course, it was impossible for the newspapers to refrain from asking, as none of them had ever thought of doing before, how it was that, with the exception of a few trumpery

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Breaking into exclamations of irrepressible delight.

balloon experiments the results of which would now be of less use than ever, the War Office had never given the slightest encouragement to the inventors who had spent their time and money in tackling a problem of the highest national importance?

Hundreds of thousands of pounds had been thrown away in the rashest experimentalising with ships, guns, and armour which were found to be obsolete almost as soon as their first unsatisfactory trials were over. Thousands more had been frittered away in tinkering with uniforms and playing at mobilisation, but not a sixpence had been spent in any attempt to solve the problem which everyone admitted must one day be solved, and whose solution by the enemies of Society now left the Governments of the world looking at each other in helpless disgust.

It is always the unexpected that happens. In this case the unexpected had happened with a vengeance, and all the resources of civilisation stood confessedly impotent to defend it from the enemy whose hand was against every man. It was the old story. Officialism laughing complacently at the dream till individual genius and enterprise replaced it by the deed; but in this case there was this difference. The air-ship was not for sale as the guns, the armour, and the machinery of the past had been. It was to be used as a means of plunder and terrorism, and the nations, armed from head to heel against each other, stood defenceless before their common enemies.

While in Europe and America the exploits of the *Destroyer* and the *Vengeur* were being thus anxiously and angrily debated, the chief actors in the ocean tragedy were securing their enormous booty and laughing over the discomfiture of their plundered foes.

In a deep rock-bound creek on the north-west coast of Africa, between Cape Bojador and Cape Garnett, protected seaward by reefs and shoals, and landward by the illimitable wastes of burning sand which none but a few wandering Arabs ever thought it worth while to cross, lay the *Destroyer* and the *Vengeur* with their treasure-laden prize.

The sailors and firemen and engineers of the *Bremen* had been compelled under pain of immediate shooting to work the vessel to within two hundred miles of the coast. Then they had been given her boats with sails, provisions, weapons and ammunition, and £50 a man for their services, and told to make the best of their way to the Canaries. This had been done just before night-fall, and the next morning there was not a trace of the pirates or their prize to be seen.

The inlet was one of a dozen equally well-chosen refuges which Hartog had picked out in different parts of the Atlantic, and he had so far followed the traditions of his predecessors in piracy that in every one of them he had concealed treasure to a very large amount. He had been very careful never to visit the same hiding-place twice in succession, so that, in case of his being seen entering one of them and information being given to the warships on the look out for him, it would be no use for them to go and lie in wait for him there.

In half a dozen secret depôts on each side of the Atlantic he had laid up stores of ammunition and the condensed petroleum fuel, treated according to a secret process known only to himself, which was burnt in the smokeless furnaces of the *Destroyer*, and the positions of these had been so skilfully chosen that he was never more than a couple of thousand miles from a refuge that was at once a hiding-place and a depôt.

As the *Destroyer* could steam four thousand miles at full speed, and over seven thousand at half speed, without refilling her fuel bunkers, his capture was to all intents and purposes an impossibility, unless a collapse of the machinery or some very improbable accident put him at the mercy of his enemies.

Heartless and soulless as the little engineer was with regard to all other subjects, he was something more than an enthusiast where machinery was concerned. He was wont to say that his heart only beat properly while his engines were working. He loved them with an affection surpassing the love of man for man, or even for woman, and it is probable that if he had been confronted with a really perfect machine he would have fallen down and worshipped it as the best possible substitute for the Deity in whose existence he did not believe.

To attempt to describe his raptures when Max, on their trip to the inlet, took him for his first flight above the clouds in the *Vengeur* would be to attempt the impossible. He himself totally failed to give it utterance. The new sensation of skimming hither and thither at will through the yielding air, of soaring or sinking as the fancy took them, and of travelling at a speed that reduced even the forty knots of the *Destroyer* to the merest crawl, filled him with emotion which for the time being struck him dumb with sheer rapture.

He went from end to end of the craft, examining everything, stroking and caressing the framework of the vessel and the metal of her engines as though they had been the sentient frame of some adored human mystery, muttering incoherently to himself, and every now and then breaking out into exclamations of irrepressible delight.

He was all eagerness to get the *Vengeur* into commission, as he put it; and before even the brief voyage was ended he had designed an armament for her which, if it did anything like what he promised for it, would render her terrible to her enemies beyond Renault's wildest dreams of destruction.

"I tell you, friend Max," he said as they were sitting together in the air-ship's saloon, a thousand feet above the inlet, on the evening of their arrival, "dat ven I haf done mit dis craft she vill be a holy terror to all der vorld both on land and sea, and ven we haf built a score or so like her, as ve vill do pretty soon, you shall do vat you like mit der earth and der fulness dereof.

"And now, I suppose you vant to hear vat ve and der comrades haf been doing all dese times you haf been away. Very well, dot vill be a bit of a long story, so ve vill haf some more drinks and smokes, and den I vill tell you all about it."

(To be continued.)

£2 2s. FOR A PLOT.

I take it for granted that, on the whole, the readers of this paper are very fair judges of a good story. Moreover, there are undoubtedly a large number of people among them who are capable of devising excellent plots for stories, while they are not gifted with the necessary ability for working them out into readable form.

It seems to me a pity that such good material should be forced by lack of opportunity to lie dormant, and, with a view to seeing what readers are capable of in this direction, I offer a couple of Guineas for what I consider to be the most striking plot for a short story.

The scene may be laid anywhere, and only a rough outline should be given, embodied in a paragraph of not more than a hundred and fifty words. Any number of attempts may be sent by each competitor, but each attempt must be on a separate sheet of paper, with the name and address of the sender on the back. Competitions to be enclosed in an envelope marked "PLOT," and to reach this office by Tuesday, **October 30th.**

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THE HANGMAN'S DAUGHTER.

SINCE the death of Calcraft, the notorious public executioner of England, the press has contained numerous incidents and anecdotes of his strangely isolated life and unenviable career; but I have only the barest mention of his daughter's name, whose unhappy love-story constituted, perhaps, the one real and familiar romance of interest connected with his personal affairs.

I knew the odd, shrinking, white-bearded, little old man very well, and, being a near neighbour of his, frequently visited his house a number of years ago. I almost always found him in the flower-garden attached to his suburban residence in London. He was passionately fond of flowers, and our common botanical tastes had much to do with the pleasant relations that were in a short time established between us.

I frequently saw his daughter Millicent, an only child, wandering among the cramped, but admirably kept, parterres in his company, but my entrance was always the signal for her instant retirement.

She was a pale and very pretty girl, about two and twenty, and, from the brief interviews into which I managed to surprise her, it was easily seen that she possessed both natural refinement and educational requirements considerably above her position in life, while her father's doting love for her was apparent from the first. But she was a prey to hopeless melancholy, and I don't think I ever saw her smile.

I had heard that she had been crossed in love, chiefly through the stigma resting upon her father's profession, and more than once hinted to him a desire to know her story. It was only after repeated requests that he at length consented to give it to me, and I will present it to the reader, as near as I can recollect, in his own words:

"It was several months after my execution of Mrs. Manning, the notorious murderess," said he, when we were seated in his little summer-house one day, "that I began to notice a change in my daughter. You remember the Manning case, don't you? No! She was a woman of gentle breeding and captivating manners, but no one questioned the justice of her conviction, and she was sentenced to be hanged. She preserved her sweetness of disposition to the very last to every one but me.

"During my few preliminary visits to her cell, she evinced only a shuddering, loathing fear of me, which would have been natural enough, but that it was accompanied by a violent personal hatred, at which I was as much grieved as mystified.

"'Headsman,' 'cut-throat,' 'paid assassin,' 'legal murderer,' 'blood-stained tool,' and 'master hangman' were amongst the epithets she would hurl upon me; and she would repeatedly hiss out between her clenched teeth:

"'I have one son in the world, Calcraft—just one—whom I have taken pains to notify of the services I am to owe to you, and he will avenge me. Oh, you wretch, he will seek you out when I am no more. He will strangle you in your bed, as you are about to strangle me on the scaffold! Then, Calcraft—then will my phantom rise out of my ignominious grave to mock and jeer at you! It will gaze upon your starting eyeballs and your swollen tongue—it will caress the clutch that fastens on your throat—it will curse, curse, curse you to the end!'

"I tried my best to reason her out of this absurd and unjust prejudice against me, but in vain. The expostulations of the chaplain, to whom she was otherwise quite tractable, had no better effect. Finally, as the day drew near, I ceased to pay any attention to her threats. I had good reason to believe that her vituperations were nothing more than insane ravings, merely calculated to strike me with affright, for it was generally understood that she was childless.

"When, at last, she stood upon the scaffold, and my final attentions were required, she did not, it is true, venture to abuse me openly, but her cold, grey eyes still rested upon me with the burning, deadly hate that I knew would only be extinguished with her life.

"You, who know me so well, must, of course, be aware that I did not reciprocate her sentiments towards me. On the contrary, I pitied her from the bottom of my heart, as I have always pitied every person in a similar position. She looked so white and horrified, indeed, when, after adjusting the noose, I was about to pull the black cap down over her face, that I whispered a few soothing words into her ear.

"How do you think she rewarded my kindness? She merely hissed out the word 'Remember!' and then she bit through the cap and through the ball of my thumb to the bone. The next instant the trap fell, and she was launched into eternity.

"You can see the cruel scar which she left me for remembrance," continued my narrator, after a moment's pause, during which he showed me the thumb of his right hand, upon which the livid impress of four teeth was distinctly visible.

"Well, I had forgotten all about the affair, and it was three or four months afterwards that I noticed the change in my daughter that I have spoken of. From being gay and cheerful, she became melancholy and dejected, and would pass hours in sombre reverie. She had looked upon me as her confidential friend as well as her father from the time when she lost her mother in her infancy, but now she grew shy of me, as though fearing I would read her thoughts.

"At last I became convinced that she must have fallen in love. I told her as much, and besought her to unbosom herself freely.

"'You know that I have nothing but your future happiness in view, Milly,' said I. 'Much as I should grieve to lose you, I am not blind to the fact that you are now a well-grown young woman, full of youth and hope, and, if you found a lover in a good man and true, and one who will make you a worthy husband, heaven knows you are welcome to my blessing, as well as to the snug little dowry I have put away for you. We have lived so long alone together, under the same ostracism entailed upon us by my unfortunate profession——'

"'That is just it,' she cried, interrupting me with a sudden burst of passionate weeping. 'He loves me—loves me to adoration—and yet I dare not tell him what you are; I dare not even tell him my last name!'

"After much difficulty, I obtained the story of her trouble. While walking in the public square, according to her custom, some weeks before, she had met a young man, the mate of a vessel in the East India trade, whose acquaintance had gradually grown to intimacy, and thence to mutual love and esteem.

"Her lover gave his name as Pitt—Mr. Pitt—which, however, he confessed to be only his Christian name. He had for ever abandoned his surname, he said, on account of a dark stain having been cast upon it by a member of his family.

"When, therefore, Millicent had persisted, in her turn, in the concealment of her own surname, he had only laughed, and said that Millicent was in itself an all-sufficient name for him to make love to, but that it would be convenient to know her family in order to press his suit for her hand in due form.

"You see, he already wished to marry her, and declared

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that he only desired her family's acquaintance for the sake of expediting the matter, and having them inquire into his character and business prospects, which he represented as unexceptionable.

"Millicent had, however, though in love, persisted in her secrecy, and it was this dilemma that had occasioned her unwonted sadness. She now wished me to let her have her lover come to see her at the house, while I still kept him ignorant of my name and vocation. I laughed at the absurdity of such a thing, and at once tried to reason her out of it.

"'Why, sooner or later, your Mr. Pitt must find out our name from some one of the neighbours, at all events,' said I. 'You know there are busybodies enough to give him hints as to my name and its significance. Why not honestly avow the truth, when, if he loves you, he cannot fail to continue doing so? Besides, there is no stain upon our name, as he confesses there is upon his; but on the shadow cast by prejudice.'

"No; she wouldn't listen to it. She would have him visit us under the distinct understanding that he should make no inquiry into our surname. Then, after she was perfectly sure that a knowledge of it would make no difference in his sentiments towards her, she would herself make known the secret, and abide the issue.

"For a long time I would not listen to her proposal, but her requests were so tearful and vehement, she implored and intreated me with such forlorn, desperate earnestness, that at last, in a moment of weakness, for which I have never forgiven myself, I consented.

"The next day Millicent brought her lover and introduced him to me in this garden, and not far from where we are now sitting. He was a fine-looking fellow, with all a sailor's proverbial honesty in his talk and bearing.

"I liked him from the first, and certain subsequent inquiries that I made at the East India offices having been answered very satisfactorily concerning his character and prospects, he presently came to see us almost every day. He had been assigned to permanent shore duty on the docks belonging to the shipowners, for whom he had been previously employed in the capacity of ship's second officer; the position was a lucrative one, and, moreover, gave plenty of time to devote to his love-making, at which he was about as industrious and absorbed as any young fellow I ever saw.

"Millicent became as happy as a butterfly in the sunshine. I was present at many of their interviews, and it really did brighten my old heart to see how thoroughly and prettily they revelled in each other's love.

"At last there came a day when the young man boldly said to me, in the presence of Milly:

"'I say, Mr. Blank'—as he was in the habit of addressing me—'I am in a quandary that you must help me out of. I want to marry Milly as soon as possible, and you have already given your consent. But how is it to be done, unless I know her name and yours? It won't be exactly legal to marry her as Miss Millicent Blank, will it?"

"'Hardly,' I replied. 'But I washed my hands of the entire affair at the outset. I must refer you to her.'

"'Let the secret rest for just one month,' cried Milly, with a nervous laugh, which could not conceal from me the anxiety she was suffering.

"'But you promised to become my wife within six weeks,' said her lover.

"'Well, then,' answered my daughter, 'on the day before the banns are published I will tell you my surname.'

"'All right,' he exclaimed, kissing her. 'So long as you finally become Mrs. Pitt, it's little matter to me what name you may have borne before, my darling. Let it be Smith, Brown, Jones, or Robinson, or fifty times commoner, it'll be all the same then.'

"But he was not destined to wait a month, or even a week, to have his curiosity satisfied.

"The very next day, while Milly and he were sitting in this self-same arbour, the catastrophe came upon us like a thunderbolt out of a blue sky. I had left the house by the street door yonder, and, seeing them sitting here, was turning the corner and strolling towards them through the laburnums, when one of my neighbours, who chanced to have something important to communicate, leaned over the front gate there, and shouted after me, at the top of his voice:

"'Calcraft, a word with you. Hullo, Calcraft, I want to speak to you.'

"Without thinking anything of the circumstance at the moment, I returned to the gate, disposed of my neighbour, and then proceeded towards the lovers. No sooner, however, did I set eyes on Milly's lover, than I saw that he had overheard my name, and that it had a terrible effect upon him.

"He had half risen from his seat, and Milly, pale as death, was grasping his arm, as he stood, crouchingly, as though in the act of springing at my throat, with a horrible expression of mingled astonishment and fury wrinkling his face, and such a look of hate and revenge leaping out of his eyes as I had never encountered before.

"'Did I hear aright?' he gasped. '*Calcraft!* Is that your name?'

"'It is,' I replied, 'and if I had had my way, you would have known it from the first.'

"'Great heaven! And you are——'

"'The public executioner of England, at your service!' I filled in.

"He sprang towards me as though to clutch my throat, but then recoiled, glaring at me, but with his hands still threateningly extended, the fingers hooked like the talons of a bird.

"'Murderer of my mother!' he almost shrieked. 'Hangman! Blood-stained slave! Do you know that, if I would obey her dying injunction, I should this moment dye my hands with your coward blood?'

"'So,' said I, drawing a long breath, 'you are, then, the son of Mrs. Manning?'

"'Ay; and bore her name until the first whisper of the crime for which she died—died at your hangman's hands—compelled me to abandon it for ever!' he yelled. 'I did not intend to pay attention to her dying injunction; it reached me on the ocean, far away, and with the knowledge of her shameful death. But now—now, when I see how you have cheated me, the trap you have set for me—I could tear you limb from limb!'

"'I have neither trapped nor cheated you, sir!' I exclaimed, thoroughly provoked, and ready to defend myself from any attack he might meditate. 'Remember that you initiated this foolish mystery with my daughter by concealing your own name. You have surely more cause to blush for it than I have for mine.'

"Then I believe he would have sprung upon me, had not Millicent at that moment rushed out of the arbour, where she had been sitting in terrible agitation, and thrown her arms round him.

"'Speak to me, darling—speak to me!' she cried. 'He is my father, and good and gentle, as he is honest and worthy. Am I not still the same to you?'

"'You?' he shouted, casting her from him. 'What! the hangman's daughter? Ha! ha! ha!'

"And then, with a wild, hysterical laugh, he rushed out of the garden like a madman.

"We never saw him again. Millicent swooned away, and then had a terrible brain fever, which lasted for months. She recovered her bodily health, but has been plunged in hopeless melancholy ever since. She will be quite well off at my death, but I do not think there is any probability of her ever marrying."

"But the recreant lover—what became of him?" I asked, after Calcraft had remained silent for a long time.

"The body of Mr. Pitt Manning was taken out of the Thames on the following morning with a bullet in the breast," replied my informant, in a low voice. "There is little doubt that he first shot himself, and then plunged into the river.

"Poor Millicent! The shadow of her father's vocation has been terribly visited upon her beautiful and innocent head."

So I thought at the time, and so I still think. She survives him, I believe, but there can be little more of joy or peace for her in this world. And such was the one romantic episode in the career of Calcraft, the hangman.

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OLD SHIPMATES

IT does not seem natural for an old warrior to die outside the scene of actual strife. Nelson in Hardy's arms, Wolfe on the plains of Abraham, fulfilled their destiny; but to die in bed, after escaping the storm of shot and shell, the perils of flood and field, that seems puerile.

Yet there was nothing puerile about the Admiral as he lay dying on the great canopied bed in that sunny room. There was no pallor on the ruddy face—the sun of sixty years and every clime had burned its mark too indelibly for that—and the great grey eyes were fearlessly open.

Then there came a rumbling word or two sounding somewhere in the front of the house. The landlord's voice was heard in reply, and then more rumbling. Then a pause, followed by the landlord's footsteps on the stairs.

"He says—it's a stranger to me—his name's Huckins, he says," came in strangulated whispers from the landlord to the doctor, "and he wants to see the Admiral."

The doctor made a frowning gesture of dissent.

"Yes, I know—I told him *that*," returned the landlord, shuffling uneasily, "but he won't go 'way—said he'd walked fourteen mile just to see the old man—that's what *he* called him," he hastened to add, apologetically.

"Tell him——" began the doctor.

"What is it?" asked the Admiral, turning his head.

"A man—Huckins," explained the landlord.

"Know me, does he?"

"Says he does. Yes, sir. Says he was a sailor—got sailor's clothes on."

"A sailor! Well, well," said the Admiral shortly, "if he wants to see me, why not?"

The landlord looked at the doctor; the doctor nodded acquiescence, although with a frown, and the landlord faded away.

The clock ticked a few more noisy minutes, and then the door opened to admit the sailor. He was an old fellow, with scanty hair brushed neatly, clean-shaven face, showing a square jaw, big blue eyes, and a skin like old sole leather—tough, brown, and wrinkled. He wore a man-o'-war's man's suit, faded, but brushed as clean as a lady's glove, and his shoes were polished like mirrors. A bright white knife lanyard crossed his shirt front, and there were a few faded letters on his cap, which he whipped off on entering.

The Admiral lifted his eyes slowly and looked at him.

"Well, my man?" he said at length, with the same intonation he had used a thousand times at sea.

The sailor brought up his hand in a salute.

"It's him," he said in a hoarse voice that smacked of fogs and salt air; "it's Old Blue!"

The doctor and the nurse looked shocked, and the landlord shivered. On the Admiral the effect was electric.

"I says to myself when I hears of you bein' here," continued the sailor, coming closer, "it's Old Blue for a hundred pounds; and it is! I'd a knowed them powder-marks on your neck among a thousand. And I walked fourteen mile to see you, and see if you remembered Bill Huckins, as was master-at-arms on the old *Pioneer*?"

"Huckins?" the Admiral raised himself on his elbow with a mighty effort. "Ah, yes, I remember you now."

He held out his hand, and then sank back on his pillow.

"You came to see me, Bill?"

"Yes, sir. Heard you was on the sick-list, and I come to cheer you up a bit. I was laid up last winter myself with a crick in my back."

"You are in some sailors' Home, I suppose?"

"Home? Bless your heart, sir, no! I raked up these togs for old times' sake—seemed more natural-like. I've got a boy that's makin' his £2 a week, and I've got a pension of 30s. a month. That's for a rap I got from a shell nigh thirty year ago."

"When was that, Bill?"

"Same day you got them marks on your neck from the breach of No. 2 gun. Don't you remember when we steamed up to the fort, when the guns was double-shotted and slappin' into us every ten feet? That was on the old *Vincent*."

"Yes, I remember," assented the Admiral, with glistening eyes.

"You was captain then, and when Lieutenant Fifer says to you, 'You go aft,' says he, ''cause there's sharp-shooters behind that ridge,' you says, says you, 'You go to the devil!' I was workin' a six-pounder near by, and I laughed right out at that, although 'twasn't no laughin' times then."

"No, indeed; no, indeed. But we silenced the fort, didn't we, Bill?"

"Didn't we, though! Knocked it clean out of sight! You couldn't play with the *Vincent that* trip. And two months later, d'ye remember how we sunk the *Rouen*, in the Gulf, after a runnin' fight of a day and a night?"

"Ah, Bill, those were famous times," said the Admiral, gazing fixedly into the air with his great eyes.

"Warn't they, though! And when we went up the Straits together in the *Eagle*, when you's just got your Commodore's pennant and took charge of the squadron—seems like it was always my luck to be shipmates with you, and I didn't want nothin' better."

"And here you are again, Bill," said the Admiral.

"Yes, sir, here I am, on deck again. When I heard you was here, I said to Tom, my son, 'I'm goin' to see the old man once more.' And Tom—he's never been to sea and don' know much—he says, 'Sho! he won't see you.' And I says, 'He was a shipmate of mine for mor'n fifteen years, and I always did my dooty. I could take my tod with any blue-jacket, and more'n once it took the whole marine guard to get me over the side, but I never shirked, and if Old Blue ain't got a good word for me, he ain't the Old Blue he used to be.'"

"Right, Bill, right," said the Admiral, smiling through the wave of pain that rippled across his face. "You were always a good sailor, Bill, but you're an old hulk now, like me."

"Sure enough, sir, we're laid up in ordinary now, sir; but there ain't nothin' can wipe out them old days from the log-book, if they have gone by."

The Admiral closed his eyes and murmured, "Gone? Ah!"

"Yes, they're gone, and we're goin'," said Bill, his voice thickening, "but we did our dooty, a' no man can say 'no' to that."

"Yes, we did our duty, old shipmate," said the Admiral, in a voice that had become thin and weak.

"Where are you, Bill? It is getting dark——"

Bill's cap dropped on the floor, and he seized the Admiral's hand in his. The others drew back without a word.

"Shipmate," said the Admiral, once more.

"Ay, ay, sir!"

"I'm on my last cruise, Bill."

"God bless you, sir, you're comin' straight into port, but you ain't dropped anchor yet."

"Just going to, shipmate," said the Admiral, while the great grey eyes stared straight ahead.

"Stand by," said the sailor-man softly.

A convulsive clasp of the withered and the brawny hand, a sigh, and Bill's grizzled head sunk on his breast.

The long voyage was over, and the Admiral had dropped his anchor.

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Should Stout Persons STARVE THEMSELVES?

We are afraid that semi-starvation as a cure for corpulency prevails very much to a dangerous degree. Mr. Archer, the late well-known prominent jockey, was in the habit of going without food for a long stretch in order that he could ride a certain horse at its weight, and there is not much doubt that the debility resulting from this habit of abstemiousness was certainly not conducive to combating the dire attack of fever which was, perhaps, indirectly responsible for the untimely end, in the zenith of his fame, of this unfortunate but accomplished horseman. Even Mary Jane in the kitchen will eat sparingly of the food allowed her, while she will seek to reduce her fat by copious draughts from the vinegar cruet, and succeeds only in injuring the coats of her stomach—the forerunner of dyspeptic trouble which will be difficult to overcome.

The Continental medicos seem to advocate this great reduction of ordinary foods, but one of these savants suggests that the stout person should eat considerably of fatty meats, in order that the appetite be appeased, and consequently less food required, so that practically this is indirectly advocating semi-starvation. On the other hand, Mr. Russell, the British specialist, takes a different course. He says, "Eat as much as you like," and as it is an acknowledged fact that under his treatment persons lose from 2 lb. to 12 lb. per week, it beyond doubt stands out pre-eminent against those so-called starvation cures "made in Germany." Some claim that Mr. Russell has to insist upon his patients drinking hot water every morning, but on the contrary he avers that it is dangerous to do so, and has, of course, never advised it. No; the success of Mr. Russell's treatment is incomparably beyond other specialists, for he resorts to no stringent dietary, and simply prescribes a harmless vegetable tonic combination which is the outcome of years of study and botanical research. We advise all those interested in this question to get this book, the price of which is only 4d. It is entitled, "Corpulency and the Cure," 256 pages, and is published by him at Woburn House, Store Street, Bedford Square, London, W.C. It can be had direct, or through any bookseller.—*The Million.*

A

POSITIVE REMEDY

FOR

CORPULENCE

Any remedy that can be suggested as a cure or alleviation for stoutness will be heartily welcomed. We have recently received a well-written book, the author of which seems to know what he is talking about. It is entitled "Corpulency and the Cure," 256 pages, and is a cheap issue (only 4d.), published by Mr. F. C. Russell, of Woburn House, Store Street, Bedford Square, London, W.C. Our space will not do justice to this book; send for it yourself. It appears that Mr. Russell has submitted all kinds of proofs to the English Press. The editor of the *Tablet*, the Catholic organ, writes:—"Mr. Russell does not give us the slightest loophole for a doubt as to the value of his cure, for, in the most straightforward and matter-of-fact manner, he submitted some hundreds of original and unsolicited testimonial letters for our perusal, and offered us plenty more, if required. To assist him to make this remedy known, we think we cannot do better than publish quotations from some of the letters submitted. The first one, a marchioness, writes from Madrid:—'My son, Count ——, has reduced his weight in twenty-two days 16 kilos=*i.e.*, 34 lbs.' Another writes:—'So far (six weeks from the commencement of following your system) I have lost fully two stone in weight.' The next (a lady) writes:—'I am just half the size.' A fourth:—'I find it is successful in my case. I have lost 8 lbs. in weight since I commenced (two weeks).' Another writes:—'A reduction of 18 lbs. in a month is a great success.' A lady from Bournemouth writes:—'I feel much better, have less difficulty in breathing, and can walk about.' Again a lady says:—'It reduced me considerably, not only in the body, but all over.' The author is very positive. He says:—'Step on a weighing machine on Monday morning and again on Tuesday, and I guarantee that you have lost 2 lbs. in weight without the slightest harm, and vast improvement in health through ridding the system of unhealthy accumulations.'"—*Cork Herald.*

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